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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

August 1993
Number 109

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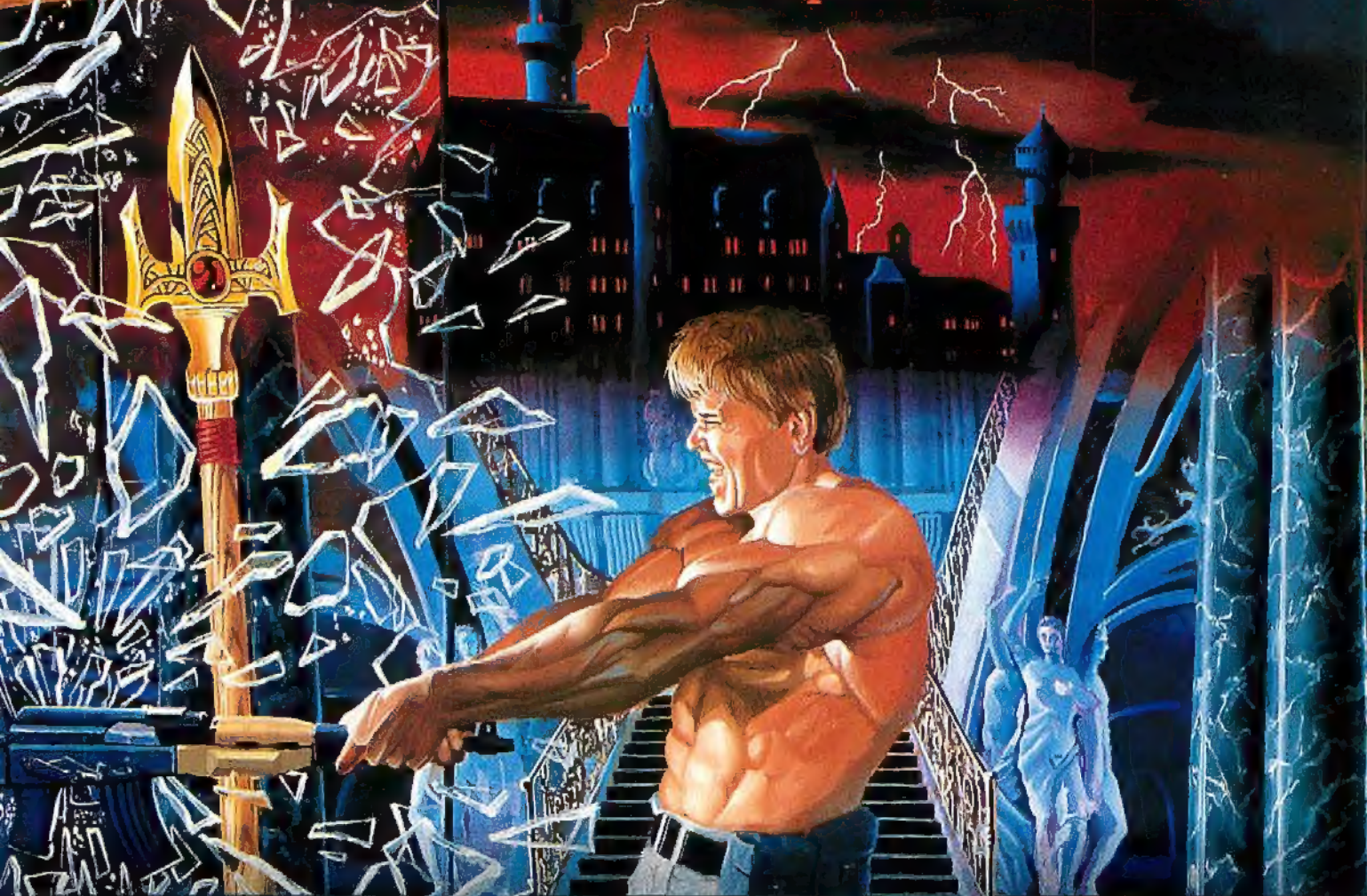
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FLOOR	SCORE	LIVES	HEALTH	AMMO
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ELECTRONIC ARTS

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Give It to Us Straight, Doc? Is It Terminal?

State of the Industry: Serving as editor of CGW has been an ideal vantage point from which to observe the fascinating changes in the world of entertainment software. Of late, rumors have been thicker than swallows at Mission San Juan Capistrano; reporters from metropolitan dailies, film industry journals, financial market periodicals, and national consumer publications have kept our phone lines busy; and the collected industry seems to be holding its breath as layoffs and red ink provide the major news. One financial wizard recently put the question to us point-blank: "Is the floppy-disk-based computer game industry dying?"

It should be obvious that we don't think so; otherwise, we would be looking for other jobs. Recently, three major players in the entertainment software industry had major layoffs: MicroProse, Sierra and Strategic Simulations, Inc. All of these companies dropped their workforce by close to 20%, and personnel offices at the rest of the companies in the business were swamped. Domsayers immediately saw signs of the Apocalypse. Yet, the layoffs at all three companies can easily be laid at the feet of hypergrowth. In this sense, we mean hypergrowth where companies expand faster than their earnings potential. This does not mean that their core business is dying, it simply means that they are encountering rough seas because their newer ventures are neither immediately profitable nor self-supporting.

In the case of both Sierra and MicroProse, because of their nature as public companies, the rumor mill has been extremely active. Both CEOs have faced rumored coups and both have lost face in the eyes of their boards of directors because of acquisitions which have not yet paid off to the bottom line. Sierra's acquisition of Bright Star Technologies and Coktel Vision made sense for the long-run company strategy. CEO Ken Williams realized that Sierra's core business (graphic adventures for Sierra and simulations at Dynamix) would need to be supplemented by new revenue streams in order to continue their growth curve (remember, Sierra had over 13 straight profitable quarters before the last few disappointing ones!). He reasoned that education and edutainment would be nice supplementary products and both of the recent acquisitions were designed to move into this area. The return, of course, has been uneven. The new ventures have not reversed the vampiric effect that *The Sierra Network* (another long-range venture that has yet to pay off) has had on the company's bottom line. In the short term, there is plenty of room to second guess Sierra, but it is far too early to write an epitaph for either this pioneer computer game company or its visionary founder.



MicroProse faces similar criticism. After acquiring their affiliated label, Paragon Software (*Mega-traveller*, *Twilight 2000*), as well as Andy Craven's Vektor Graphics (*Shuttle*, *B-17*), MicroProse found themselves having to axe some projects, and getting disappointing sales results from others. This, combined with the disappointing performance and potential for the projected *Darklands*-style series, and the fact that it is taking longer than expected to get new products out from the graphic adventure engine (*Rex Nebular*), means that the bottom line at MicroProse is as red as a traditional fire engine. That directors and stockholders would be losing confidence in management is a given. The truth is, however, that there is plenty of legitimately good product in the pipeline, given enough funding to keep things moving.

Finally, Strategic Simulations, Inc. is a company that was expanding more rapidly than the founder's philosophy allowed. It built up an in-house development staff to exploit the resources of its *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* license from TSR. Then, before the company could produce the new engine needed to recapture the market (which was softening in their previously successful Gold Box Series), they faced a financial crisis of their own. Now, the health of SSI will likely rely upon whether they can get a new line of *AD&D* licenses on the market in a reasonable length of time and whether said line captures the imagination of gamers like the original series did.

As for the market in general, we continue to see incremental growth in traditional computer games. Some fear that disk-based entertainment will be swallowed up by other competing interactive platforms, but we see reasons for hope. First, disk-based entertainment is the most inexpensive R&D and test market environment. One can inexpensively test market in the floppy disk market and see if a concept will fly or not. Expansion of CD-ROM technology will only enhance this test market capacity. Second, it is where the most innovative design community has always resided. Third, the installed base of personal computers is still growing; the industry just needs to find the right products to reach all of the potential new customers. Fourth, expanded telecommunications services simply enhances the possibilities.

In short, we are in a period of consolidation, but we don't think this industry is dying.

State of the Magazine: This issue marks the 10th anniversary of Scorpio's first appearance in CGW. It also marks the first appearance of Chris Lombardi as Associate Editor (Chris has moved up the ranks from Editorial Assistant through Assistant Editor to this new position) and Chuck Miller (formerly editor of *Enchanted Realms*) as Assistant Editor. CGW continues to expand its staff to cover what we still consider to be a growing industry.

CGW

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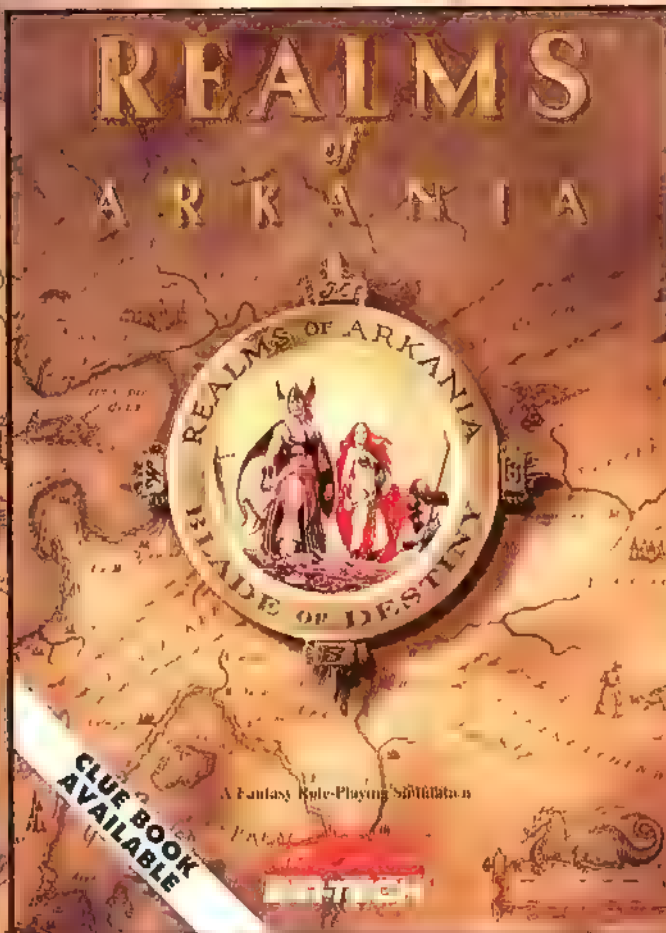
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The Qualifying Lap

In the Pit with Papyrus IndyCar Racing

by Gordon Goble

The year was 1989. Ex-Formula 1 auto-jockey Emerson Fittipaldi basked in the glory of his maiden victory at the esteemed Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and Papyrus Design Group, an inconspicuous software developer in Massachusetts, was set to release its first product. *Indianapolis 500: The Simulation* was playable right from the program's sole diskette and boasted "enhanced detail on 286 CPUs." Although the complexity of such programs may have grown since that year, *Indy*'s realistic portrayal of life at the wheels of North America's fastest racing machines gradually captured the hearts of armchair racers around the computer gaming world.

Time-warp to 1993, a year in which "Emmo" would repeat and for just his second time reign supreme at the Indy 500 (and in the process frustrate race organizers and the American Dairy Board alike with his callous disregard for the traditional post-race beverage of choice. Himself an owner of several orange groves, the cocky Brazilian opted instead for o.j.).

Where Emmo goes, it seems, so goeth that little company from Massachusetts, and in a case of "deja vu all over again," Fittipaldi's second Indy triumph will be followed yet again with a visit to Victory Lane by Papyrus. Propelling Papyrus to the front of the pack will be its fourth quarter '93 release of *IndyCar Racing*, a wholly rewritten, graphically stunning, and certainly more comprehensive competitor to the beloved *Indy 500* racing simulation. However, the race to #1 in the expeditiously evolving world of racing simulations won't be an easy one.

In the years since *Indy 500*'s release, there have been a number of forays into the racing sim market, not the least of which was MicroProse's 1992 offering of *World Circuit*. It is fair to say that this little gem took the digital racing world by storm, and certainly, following on the heels of such a warm-up act is never a simple task. Fortunately for Papyrus, they have prepared a package that should please (if not astound) most serious armchair drivers

The original *Indy* achieved much of its notoriety by being a true "driver's game," offering superb handling characteristics alterable through a multitude of pragmatic set-up adjustments. *IndyCar Racing* will seemingly follow in the successful footsteps of its predecessor. Apart from releasing sim-o-maniacs from the confining restraints of the Indianapolis oval, *IndyCar Racing* will captivate the eyes before anything else, much in the same manner that *Falcon 3.0* and *Comanche: Maximum Overkill* changed forever our computer skies.

The secret to the look of *IndyCar Racing* is what has commonly become known as "3D texture mapping," and *IndyCar* has it in droves. Gone are flat polygons. Practically everything on the screen is textured, creating the illusion of depth and, dare I say, an environment that is virtually real. This form of graphical approach is most assuredly a race-sim first, and a welcome one at that. Track, grass, trees, barriers, and other cars all benefit from this advanced technology, but the most important difference is in the cars themselves.



The cars now resemble actual racing machines as opposed to rolling pyramids and, in the tradition of *Indy 500*, they are perspective-correct from all angles, including those of the six instant replay cameras: TV, In Car, Gearbox, Chase, Sky and Blimp. All vehicles now carry the logos of team sponsors, and very legible corporate signage has been strategically and liberally sprinkled across each track. Even the color of off-course grass varies from location to location, as does that of on-course pavement. Banking is present (no,

nor the cash machine variety, but angled track designed to keep one pointed in the right direction), and it actually works!

Adding to the ambiance and perhaps lending some driving assistance, will be the presence of two very thoughtful amenities, that of tire smoke, and a "groove." (Although not present on the preview copy, both are assured.) While tire smoke will merely increase one's viewing enjoyment, a groove will be indicated on screen as pavement tears rubber from the tires that pass over top of it. Being "in the groove" is generally a good place to be, as this is a tried and true line around the track and through the corners.

An intriguing, if not a trifle warped, aspect of the original *Indy* was the hell-bent multiple car crashes that could occur (or be manufactured). This highlight will only change for the better in *IndyCar Racing*, with reliable sources stating that "car wrecks will be unlike anything seen before." The severest of impacts will result in colossal explosions, actually breaking the car apart into its individual components. Engines will tumble and wheels will roll down the track with abandon. Says *IndyCar Racing* developer John Wheeler, "We're going to have some great explosions, let me tell you...heh, heh, heh."

While the Papyrus special effect department has obviously been hard at work, very little of the above would really matter if *IndyCar* didn't offer solid mechanics. Tracks must be accurate, car set-up must be both comprehensive and effective, and most importantly, driving feel must excel. From early indications, *IndyCar Racing* delivers on all three accounts.

As alluded to earlier, no longer will one be performing one's vehicular carnage at the Indianapolis oval. *IndyCar Racing* will sport six and possibly as many as eight tracks, including two or three courses shipped once *IndyCar* purchasers complete and mail their registration cards like good little race car drivers should. At press time, probable initial locales include the ovals of Michigan and Milwau-

kee, and the road course of Laguna Seca. Add-on courses will become available (for a small additional fee) as they are completed.

The two tracks (Laguna and Michigan) included on our preview copy were depicted with remarkable accuracy. The former is far from temperate in real life—nor is it here—and both the Corkscrew and Turn 11 hairpin are particularly deceptive and difficult. Throw in some true-to-life elevation changes (driving backwards up through the Corkscrew shows just how steep this grade really is!) and you have one heck of a breathtaking course. Michigan, on the other hand, is built for speed, speed and more speed. I have taken a few laps around the real world banked monster that is Michigan, and *IndyCar Racing* does indeed provide the next best thing to being there. One can only suspect that new tracks will be created with the attention and care shown in these two examples.

It takes a very different car to tackle the screaming Michigan oval after a bout with the twisting Laguna Seca course, and never has a racing sim incorporated such an array of automobile alterations. Although we could tinker with only front and rear wings, fuel load, and gear ratios on the preview model, adjustments to the following have been promised by release date: tire compounds, tire stagger, tire camber, tire pressure, shock spring stiffness, anti-roll, fuel mixture, turbo boost, spark advance, wing configurations (large road wing vs. small speedway wing), brake bias, chassis and more!

During preview sessions, less wing, taller gears and a decreased fuel load all did their job at Michigan (and resulted in a fast 31.1 lap time), while more wing and shorter gears got us down to a 1:17.2 time during limited practice at Laguna Seca. Once again, if developers have placed equal care and attention on other car set-up options, the only concern for the PC racer will be the arrangement of all of the above into some form of harmonious configuration for each track.

The *IndyCar Racing* preview model included none of the driver's aids that will appear on the release edition, and we had to rely on our astounding natural ability to get us through the often arduous expert mode. There are but three words that best sum up the handling of an *IndyCar* car in this ultra-realistic mode: *it ain't easy*. Game designers have devoted much effort and time into the illusion of realism, and there are a number of innovations to the digital racing world that are part and parcel of the real life fast lane. Still, these ideas are new to a computer, and there will most probably be a lengthy learning curve for *IndyCar* students, even those who have studied under the tutelage of *World Circuit* et al.

Driving an *IndyCar* car for the first time presents a distinct experience from the sensations provided by any previous computer racing simulation. Total and undivided

concentration is a crucial factor for solid on-track results, and one must be wary of the



forces at work on one's car. These forces won't feel present on the computer monitor, but certainly would in a real, moving racing machine. Until a joystick, computer desk and chair are capable of providing tactile feedback, caution is the watchword.

Not only will one have to deal with the horizontal plane, but likewise the omnipresent element of the vertical. Gravity has its effects; the player's car will most definitely feel lighter at the crest of a hill than at its base, and for a moment one may feel he or she is in



control of a fighter jet. Diving a tad too hotly into a given corner will provide even more surprises. Sudden braking may provide an innovative loss of adhesion with the track surface, while a prudent and exacting turn on the steering wheel or joystick is most often a better way of keeping oneself on the black stuff. Are both these features consistent with the real thing? You betcha!

These elements notwithstanding, the navigational characteristics of the car in the preview version seemed a might jumpy, or skittish, if you will. Fortunately, *IndyCar Racing* lead programmer David Kaemmer assures one and all that he too is not yet satisfied with this aspect, and that the issue will be addressed before release.



So...does all this realism make for a more enjoyable game? How far does realism go

before taking away from the sheer pleasure of participation? Certainly anyone attempting to master *IndyCar Racing*'s expert mode will have a long road ahead of them, but those drooling for the closest glimpse yet into real world racing need look no further. Kaemmer himself makes an interesting point in saying, "Realism vs. enjoyment is the key issue. When you look at *Indy 500* and *World Circuit*, they fall at opposite ends of the spectrum. I think interest fades in *World Circuit* because it's just too easy. Like the real world, people enjoy things involving skill and a constant challenge."

"*IndyCar Racing* attempts to satisfy both elements, with the most challenging and realistic game in expert mode, but an easy and enjoyable experience when all the driving assistance features are enabled. I think people today want to feel that somehow the time they've spent playing a game has been put to good purpose. This is what we're trying to offer with *IndyCar Racing*."

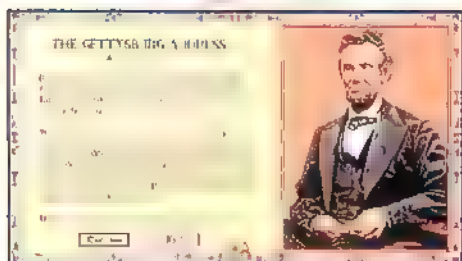
Yet another considerable first in the world of racing sims is Papyrus' decision to include a myriad of custom-designed control options with *IndyCar Racing*. A huge variety of control and input devices exist today, and while one person will prefer "Brand X" joystick, another may swear by "Brand A." Still others possess a steering wheel of some description, and more may have foot-triggered acceleration and braking. *World Circuit* introduced graduated braking and acceleration, and that was greeted with much glee. Papyrus aims to please all of the people all of the time, and players will have the ability to assign any key, switch, or button to control practically anything they wish, with the option of deciding between analog and digital velocity adjustments. A joystick sensitivity and calibration program will also be part of the package.

Following the lead of *World Circuit*, a modern play feature will be included, as will, sadly, some form of piracy protection. Music (which inevitably is switched to the off position anyway) was not present on the preview copy, but engine notes and tire squeals are both up to par and informative. Menuing is layered, straightforward and dead simple.

For those who enjoy storing those extra special moments for posterity, any number of replays can be saved to disk. Although remaining limited to less than a half minute apiece, visual search and frame-by-frame options are included, and, quite simply, never have race cars looked so good on a computer. The TV camera view is especially spectacular as our hero churns into view, swoops underneath the camera position with perspectively correct sponsor names for all to see, and speeds off into the distance.

In the progressive world of digital realism, *IndyCar Racing* is the next logical step in racing simulations. Enjoy the view—it is phenomenal. Beware the drive, though—it is all too real **CEW**

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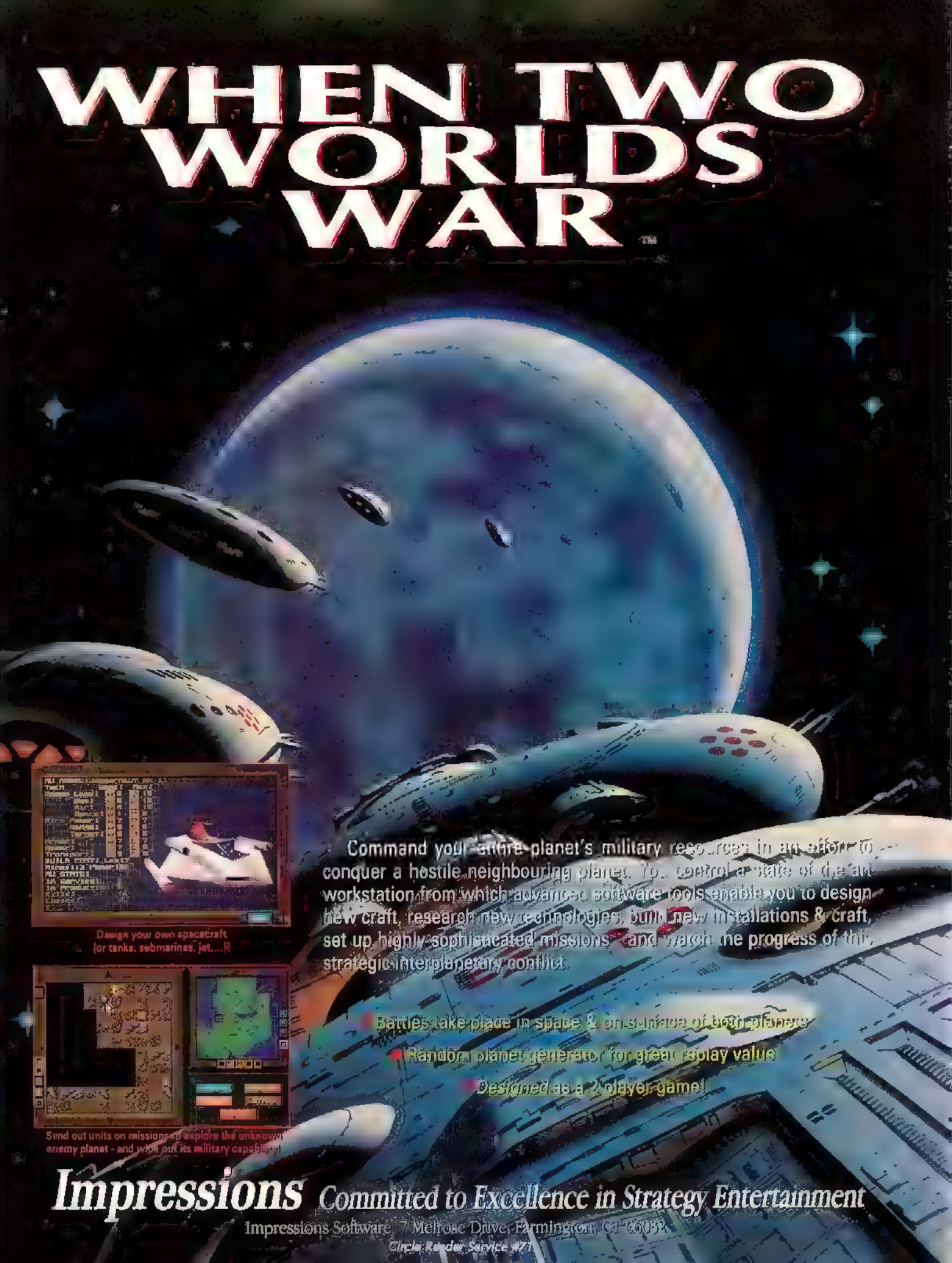
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Is It Party Time For Consumers?

CGW Dances Through The Summer Consumer Electronics Show

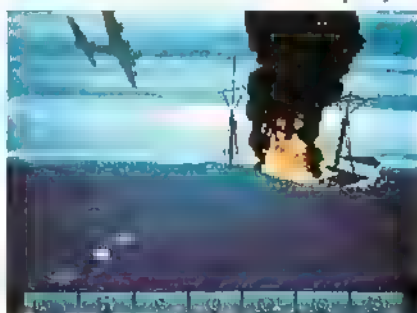
The "Shrimp Bowl Hypothesis" of computer industry health has long been held. It posits that the industry economic outlook for the next six months is directly proportional to the steepness of the slope in the shrimp bowls served at the latest trade show. Translation: Companies don't usually spend money unless they're expecting to make considerably more in the next selling season. The hypothesis seems extremely apropos with regard to entertainment software in 1993. Sales were flat to rapidly declining in the last fiscal year, and it is a hopeful sign to see companies with renewed enthusiasm and high expectations. Here are some of the reasons for the optimism.

Interplay danced into its second decade of corporate existence as a company grossing between \$20 and \$30 million dollars per year. The company filled up Chicago's famous Park West nightclub (ironically, the sight of many a great Mindscape rock 'n roll party during the software industry's last heyday) with a bar that would irrigate California's Central Valley and a crowd that exceeded 1,200 (400 gate crashers were alleged to have been turned away). Imagine a secret coterie of Interplay employees carrying Brian Fargo's photo around on cardboard fans and laying playful 'Sieg Heil's on one another as they circulated among the crowd. We thought we had joined a software cult for a moment there. Fargo is something of a software legend, however, since he went from selling ziplocked Apple II games with a piece of artwork on the cover (that had nothing to do with the game, save the fact that both were part of the fantasy genre) to the dealmaking head of a company which is so diversified into the different sectors of the industry that the company should be able to weather hard times whether multimedia becomes dominant, 3DO breaks through, or the

Hollywood convergence pushes entertainment software onto the data highway. Interplay is prepared to move in any direction. Maybe they'll do a multimedia version of *Iron Butterfly's* "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" with their live band performing the longest version of the song this side of the album, just like they did at the party.

Accolade had feet dancing and beach balls flying during their beach bash. Their velcro wall had even normally sane journalists putting on their velcro suits, performing flips and landing upside-down as they stuck to the material. The company had reason to celebrate. They are poised to take advantage of both dominant platforms in the video game industry; they have come to a settlement with Sega of America so that the cloud of legal reparations no longer hang over their heads; and they have managed to assemble an affiliated label program that keeps their toe in the water of disk-based development for whenever they need to return to that arena. Currently, the company is focused upon video game design, but they are expecting to convert their successes into more sophisticated disk-based versions in the future.

Museums were especially in vogue as venues for presentations of new products. Three such events rather reminded us of the famous Activision/Infocom party at



Dynamix' Graue Wolle



CGW's publisher meets the trade.

the Field Museum of Natural History where the *Second City* improvisational troupe performed a half dozen sketches to promote their line of upcoming adventure games.

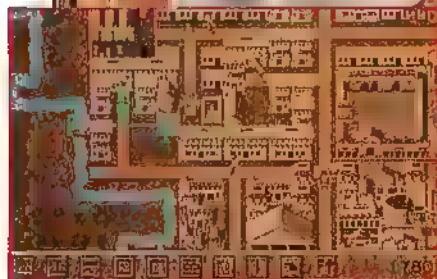
Sierra's Dynamix division celebrated their upcoming launch of *Graue Wolle* by renting the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry. Guests could not only enjoy the ambiance of the museum and grab their sandwiches and hors d'oeuvres from under a large ice sculpture of a U-boat, but attendees could explore an authentic captured WWII U-boat at their leisure. Meanwhile, Microsoft unveiled their new *Space Simulator* and *Flight Simulator 5* at a Chicago planetarium, and Knowledge Adventure, the educational publishers, used the Shedd Aquarium as the backdrop for their special event.

Hooray for Hollywood!

One of the most amazing portents of why the "shrimp bowl slope" is currently so steep in entertainment software was the joint presentation by Walt Disney Studios, Virgin Games and Sega of America. Breakfast was served in an elaborate baazaar with a lavish production number consisting of the overture from *Aladdin* and "Prince Ali" processional march, state-of-the-art staging (complete with laser show special effects), and cameo ap-

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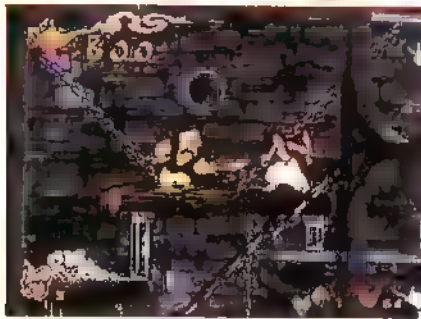
Battles may also be fought out in detailed, animated combat using a much enhanced version of Impressions' Cohort (Cohort II will be available separately).



Keep off hostile tribes with cross country walls to match The Great Wall of China

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Virgin's *Aladdin*

pearances from the presidents and/or CEOs of all three companies. Even though the product being touted at the breakfast was a Sega Genesis cartridge, the level of cooperation between these three companies sends a significant signal. Virgin has developed a process for bringing cel-based animation to the Genesis. Disney Studios allowed the animators who worked on the film version of *Aladdin* to provide enough access to cels that all of the movement in the game looks like the animation in the film. Then, Sega adds its marketing muscle into the equation and expects to sell in excess of a million units of the game. Welcome to the convergence of mainstream entertainment and the interactive entertainment industries! We're due for an interesting ride.

Sony's purchase of Psygnosis has thus far enhanced the working relationship which already existed between the studio's own electronic publishing division (videogame-oriented) and the British company with its disk-based expertise. Unlike the Sega-CD version of *Dracula* (where the cinematic sequences merely serve to set-up the sideways-scrolling fighting game), the expected first quarter '94 release of *Dracula* CD-ROM will feature more first person perspective with role-playing aspects. In addition, Psygnosis plans to publish games based on *The Last Action Hero* and *Cliffhanger* films.

ICOM Simulations has thus far not tapped into the licensing potential of their new parent company, Viacom International. The large media conglomerate controls the Showtime, Nickelodeon, MTV and VH-1 cable channels, as well as syndicating television series and funding made-for-TV movies like their 25 Perry Mason films. However, ICOM continues to use interactive film as its primary graphic presentation. *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* is entering its third iteration (with the new video footage looking tremendously improved) and the new *Dracula Unleashed* takes advantage of fully constructed sets (as opposed to using the Ultramatte technique where

live actors perform on artist-rendered sets as in *Return to Zork* or *The 7th Guest*).

Trimark Interactive (the new game division of Trimark Pictures) has opted to take *White Men Don't Jump* onto the console machines as their first official foray into interactive entertainment. It does not appear that the division intends to blend actual film and interaction in any of their first generation products, but statements by Mark Amin (President of Trimark Interactive) indicate that they expect to have fully interactive full-motion video products on the shelf in approximately three years.

Paramount's Paramount Interactive division is currently specializing in disk-based educational games. *Richard Scarry's Busytown* is a marvelous implementation of the Scarry mythos (programmed by Novotrade, see related story this issue). It features an animated helicopter cursor and lots of animation. They are also releasing *Lenny's MusicToons*, a music video creation tool for five year olds and up; *Rock, Rap'n Roll*, an adult music creation utility; and *Movie Select*, a database of 42,000 different films with a powerful search utility. There are a few movie clips, but not very many. Thus far, Paramount's film and television licenses are still up for bid. Interplay Productions has a new adventure game based on the original series, as well as the multimedia version of their original *StarTrek: The 25th Anniversary Game*. Spectrum HoloByte continues to develop *StarTrek: The Next Generation* products on console, personal computers, 3DO and location-based entertainment centers. *Deep Space Nine* will be published by a toy manufacturer and new player in the software arena, Playmates (see this issue's Rumor Bag).



The prehistoric gateway to the Sega area

Naturally, this hasn't reduced the competition for high profile products such as *Jurassic Park*. Nearly every format from 3DO through Sega-CD has a *Jurassic Park* game under development. Sega built their booth around the *Jurassic Park* theme (see picture) and has not one, but two games under development using the property. The basic Genesis game is, essentially, a "shooter" like most arcade games. The Sega-CD version is expected



Artists at work on *Jurassic Park* for Sega-CD

to have more role-playing and strategic elements to it than the basic console game. The company is also expending considerably more in the graphic budget for the CD version. 3DO's *Jurassic Park* is expected to use an interface analogous to the computer interface in the labs (in the film) and to take advantage of the 3-D modeling capability of the system.

Everybody's Doin' It! (3-D First Person Role-Playing)

Five first-person perspective, 3D-style role-playing games will challenge each other for market supremacy during the Fall of '93. Such formidable names as Westwood Studios, Origin, and Interplay will mingle with up and coming companies like Bethesda Softworks and Twin Dolphin Games in this genre. At first glance, the games are very similar, but a deeper look shows different design strengths for each of them.

Interplay's *Stonekeep* uses a full screen, optional on-screen interface approach. If one desires, it is possible to hide the interface and merely step through the dungeon. In addition to the beautiful wall textures and the first-person feel, Peter Oliphant and the rest of the design team have managed to create a technology that combines video with computer graphics in such a way that the full-size monsters/villains jump out at the player. The interface is optimized to put the gamer into the middle of the monitor screen and the company is working with a peripheral manufacturer (to be announced later) that will enable the combat to work with a simulated 3-D input device.

Origin's *Shadowcaster* is not a full-screen presentation. It features 1d Software's hot 3-D polygon-filled technology with bit-mapped textures placed over the tops of objects (allowing the program to deal with simple polygon-filled structures/objects in the code itself while the gamer sees the pretty artwork overlaid on top that is not as processor intensive). Raven Software's *The Black Crypt* incredible fantasy art, music from Origin, and a fascinating story. Characters will explore pulsating hallways, walls that

Ultima VII

PART TWO



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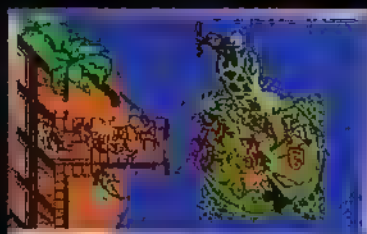
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SERPENT ISLE FEATURES:

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- Digitized speech, enhanced sound effects and a dynamic musical score (with supported sound boards).
- Available for 386SX, 386, 486 or 100% compatible systems.

breathe, and rooms that offer incredibly disorienting perspectives.

Produced by Electronic Arts' Victor Penman, the game requires players to shift between six different shapes: a muscle-bound giant, a humanoid, a fire elemental, an aquatic creature, an electrical charge and sonic energy. By doing so, one can play the one-to-three hour scenarios that make up the building blocks of the game. The metamorphosis from one creature/being to another is not only important to solving puzzles and being victorious in combat, but each creature moves differently and views the corridors and rooms from a different perspective.

Westwood Studios' *Lands of Lore* is not to be confused with the engine built by Westwood forSSI's *Eye of the Beholder* series. It is a brand new system built from the ground floor with the goal of working with the 386/33 machines. Those who think the detailed texture-mapped, smooth scrolling graphics are too slow or too disorienting can opt for a stepped sequence through the dungeons/locales via the stepped sequence (one discreet move at a time) found in earlier games. The company is also trying to put some of the cinematic knowledge they have been acquiring from previous games to use in their CRPGs, so they are using their new technology, "Westwood Outtake Manifold," to present smooth-running cut-scenes in which to advance the story.

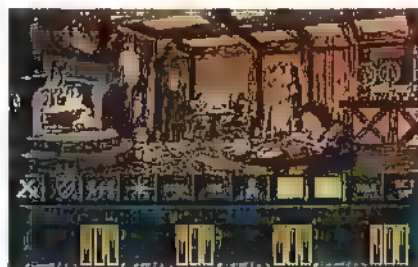


Westwood's *Lands of Lore*

The most impressive graphic aspect of the game, however, involves the special effects associated with magic. Magic, in the game's fiction, depends upon drawing upon forces and having a dramatic (cinematic?) production develop on-screen. "In spite of what 3DO says," observed Louis Castle, "that [the special effect we had just witnessed] was transparent images across a 386 screen." The 3DO design team claims that the special effect, where a semi-transparent image moves rapidly across other objects, cannot be accomplished efficiently on a standard personal computer.

Westwood believes that their multi-branching story structure (which unfolds depending on the order in which puzzles are solved or tasks accomplished) is both more complex and more satisfying than

anything the company has ever done. Further, the entire story and game design was assembled with an emphasis on characterization. One adds to the adventuring party through recruitment and has complete control as long as the NPCs are with the party, but the key is that one cannot control when the NPCs leave the party or why.



Bethesda's *The Elder Scrolls: The Arena*

On the show floor, crowds were assembled around the large screen displaying *The Elder Scrolls: Chapter 1: The Arena*. Gamers haven't heard much about Bethesda Softworks in recent days, but they are pushing 3-D technology in three different games. Graphically, *The Arena* features texture-mapped objects and special effects to match those in the Westwood title (both companies are pushing the edge of the envelope in light-sourcing, and both have an edge over the other in one special effect or another).

The best news about *The Arena* for role-players, however, is that the attention to character generation and story may be the most careful design work since Roc Adams III consulted with Lord British on *Ultima IV*. Character generation is story-based. Gamers read a case study and react to the situation as they believe their characters would react. Then, detailed statistics are generated from the results of the quiz. Further, the game is big! It has over 2,500 magical items and the potential to mix and match them, as well as more than 400 adventuring locales (not just rooms) to explore. Plus, the company plans to fully utilize the engine by adding expansion adventures and campaign modules in the future.

Yet another player in the 3D first-person CRPG market is Twin Dolphin Games. Their *Forgotten Castle* series is opening with *Forgotten Castle: The Awakening*. *Forgotten Castle* allows one to play with a full interface surrounding a reduced screen, or to hide the interface and play with a full screen. The thrust of this game is plenty of action connected by a number of cinematic sequences. The company hopes to add modem-play to the second game in the series and, assuming all goes well, network play in the third game of the series.

Meanwhile, there is evidence that 3-D role-playing will be an even bigger arena in 1994. Interplay plans to release *Dungeon Master II* in that year, and Domark is planning to unveil a game called *Cisadel* that will use a voxel engine (which manipulates blocks of pixels rather than each pixel at a time) and texture mapping. Considering that NovaLogic is applying for a patent on voxel technology and is planning to use the technology in an upcoming role-playing or adventure product, there may be very interesting times ahead.

Finally, Spectrum HoloByte's *Star Trek: The Next Generation* CRPG for the 3DO machine uses three-dimensional modeling in a different way. Although the MS-DOS version of the game will feature traditional graphics technology, the 3DO team is attempting to exploit the graphics capacity of the machine by creating a face technology that presents Captain Picard as a full 3-D object with over 5,000 polygons.

Reel It In (Video)

One aspect of multimedia products that designers have dreamed of for years is the ability to integrate film/video with computer-generated images on the fly. ICOM has led the way in terms of interactive film with their *Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective* series, based on the Sleuth Publications game, and the company is now unveiling *Dracula Unleashed*. ICOM's formula has always been to reduce the video window slightly and enhance the image of the rest of the screen by framing it with traditional graphics (including the interface). The newest game not only boasts improved resolution on the video clips, but only cues up the clips if the player's character gets to the scene at the appropriate time.



ICOM's *Dracula Unleashed*

Virgin and Trilobyte's *The 7th Guest, Part Two: The 11th Hour - Be Afraid of the Dark* is not only expected to set a new record for long titles, but is designed to feature more video than its predecessor. This time, the video will feature both live and ghostly actors. The game, for both CD-ROM and 3DO, will take gamers

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Saturdays in May on **CNBC**.

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Daniel Epstein
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both inside and outside the mansion, as the little town of Harley is presented entirely in live video.

Another company using real video for their games is American Laser Games. Their wild west shoot-'em-up, *Mad Dog McCree*, will display non-stop live action video on CD-ROM, Sega CD and the 3DO platforms. Using the technologies which the company developed for the coin-op market, American Laser Games also plans to publish similar games in the 1994 time frame: *Space Pirates* (outer space action), *Who Shot Johnny Rock?* (gangster shoot-outs), *Crime Patrol* (law enforcement) and *Gallagher's Gallery* (a shooting gallery game with the comedian as host).

As noted in previous reports, Activision's *Return to Zork* features professional actors performing on computer-graphic sets. The video was taken using an Ultramatte technique and superimposing the video atop the graphics (the same technique used in *The 7th Guest*). The great news for gamers is that the CD-ROM version of this game will support an as yet to be announced video/sound card that will retail for under \$500 and, because of its built-in chip set, will play back video at 30+ frames per second with a 32,000 color display. This allows game

designers to run true video at a fast rate behind the interface and allow the superimposed interface to react at the slower latency which most interactive multimedia games currently require. CGW will report on the card prior to its release, and we expect it to have a significant impact on multimedia game design in the future.

What You Hear is What You Get (Audio)

For more than three years, audio has been playing an increasingly large role in the computer game industry. CD-ROM products, in particular, are beefing up their soundtracks with extra music (sometimes extra video such as the Roberta Williams interview on the new *King's Quest VI* CD) and a full talkie presentation. Interplay went to the studio with Leonard Nimoy, William Shatner and DeForest Kelley for their *Star Trek* multimedia game; LucasArts cast *WKRP in Cincinnati*'s Richard Sanders (Les Nessman) as the protagonist of their *Day of the Tentacle* talkie; Activision's *Return to Zork* uses a full cast of professional actors; and CD-based games from both MicroProse (*Return of the Phantom*) and Sierra (*King's Quest VI*) will feature full digitized speech.



Activision's *Return to Zork*

Sierra's *Gabriel Knight* uses sound incredibly effectively to enhance the mood for the game. Written by Jane Janson (co-author of *King's Quest VI*), the game centers around a series of voodoo murders, and the gamer has ten game days to solve the case. The fascinating audio-visual aspect is the way a cinematic cut-scene (that changes as the player's character zeroes in on the murderer) integrates the soundtrack and the dream symbology. It was the first time we have actually experienced fear from watching a computer game product. The combination of art, music, sound and image really communicates the danger within the story.

Don't Grow Accustomed to the Interface

Across all genres, but particularly in the adventure and role-playing arenas, there is an increasing trend to hide the interface. The goal, of course, is two-fold. First, it allows the gamer more of a sense of suspended disbelief because it provides for a full-screen (or near full-screen) presentation. Second, it allows the gamer to call up the interface, usually with one mouse click, when he or she needs it, rather than having the interface *always* in one's face. The latter will be extremely important as software publishers begin designing for multimedia computer games in the future because it allows for simpler controls and larger on-screen figures, objects and backgrounds.

LucasArts has adapted its SCUMM interface (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) to allow for bigger figures and this will show in both *Sam and Max Hit The Road* and the Steven Spiel-



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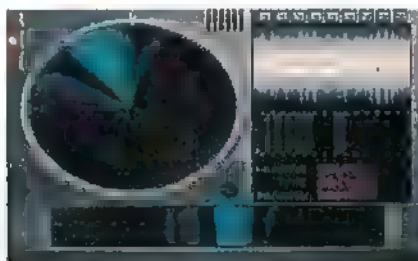


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Electronic Arts' *Seawolf*

Now, with the new general midi boards coming into play, sound is going to play a significantly larger role. Electronic Arts' *Seawolf* will use stereo sound cues as part of the game, and "The Fat Man" has provided music with more "game states" (different tension levels to the score) than his previous efforts in the *Wing Commander* series. John Ratcliff, the designer of the simulation, has even managed to reuse the sound files to enhance the graphic look of the game by playing them visually over one of the on-screen gauges.

Activision's *Return to Zork* used 13 live studio musicians to create its soundtrack, and the entire recording section was mixed by the engineer who mixed the *Aliens 3* soundtrack and has worked with John Williams on his motion picture scores. The lead trumpet on the game's soundtrack is also the lead in the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. Quality music continues to make a qualitative difference in the game experience.



LucasArts' *Sam and Max Hit The Road*

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berg/Brian Moriarty collaboration called *The Dig*.

Activision and Tsunami have been using a pop-up interface in their latest products, but Sierra is experimenting with their interface in a number of ways. They are breaking out into a "letter box" screen look on a number of products (in order to be able to move the text and remove it for CD versions) and trying to make each set of command icons look distinctive to the game. In addition, they have adapted the talking face technology of their Bright Star Technologies subsidiary and integrated it into many of their games. Further, *Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness*, will not only feature an impressive introduction using a *Vistapro*-generated world, but a new and improved combat interface, as well.

In addition to the actual changes in the command line, *Gabriel Knight* will have a different look than previous Sierra games because many of the cut-away scenes are being handled like some of those impressive two-page spreads in the Frank Miller or Pepe Moreno-style graphic novel. Further, much of the game will be conversation-driven with plenty of cut-away perspectives there.



Sierra's *Gabriel Knight*

The Artifice of Intelligence

On the artificial intelligence front, we must report what we consider to be an amazing breakthrough. Sid Meier's *CPU Bach* for the 3DO machine is undoubtedly a breakthrough. The program actually creates baroque compositions "on the fly." The software composes in the style of the baroque composers. This, of course, belies the old aphorism that computers will never be able to compose music, but it's true. All of the compositions which we were able to hear were true to the style. They had marvelous counterpoint and harmony, while offering just enough melody to keep one interested.

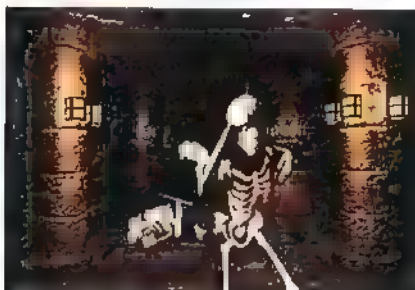
The downside is that the personal computer version prototype allowed one to save compositions and print out scores. We are not sure whether the 3DO version will have this capacity or not. The company has suggested that the architecture of the 3DO machine will eventually sup-

port a memory-card storage system, but this is not part of the original product.

Aesthetically, the downside of the *CPU Bach* program is that it does not create the brilliant melody lines one associates with Bach. Nonetheless, the existing product is absolutely mesmerizing. One can adjust the dynamics and tempo, change the instrumentation and, in essence, be the conductor for this Johann Silicon Bach and his compositions.

Role Out the Character (CRPGs)

This fall looks like it is going to be a rich one for role-players. In addition to the 3-D first-person role-playing games, there will be an intriguing mix of titles. Sequels will abound with Origin's *Ultima VII, Part II: Serpent Isle/Silver Seed* (a \$29.95 add on), Mindcraft's *Bloodstone* (the Dwarven side of *The Magic Candle* saga), Interplay's *Dungeon Master II* (a sequel to FTL's award winning *Dungeon Master*), Sierra's *Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness* (a hybrid adventure/role-playing game in the tradition of the original *Quest for Glory*) and *Pirates Gold* from MicroProse (the new version of the hybrid game will actually allow one's pirate captain to advance in existing skills and to gain new ones).



Interplay's *Stonekeep*

In addition to the sequels, some games were announced at earlier shows and are just now nearing release. Dynamix will soon release its first CRPG, the long-awaited *Betrayal at Krondor*. The game, based on the popular fantasy series by Raymond E. Feist, was previewed in CGW #103.

Also, Sir-Tech Software is nearing release of its first game in the *Realms of Arkania* line, *Blade of Destiny*. Based on the German hit, *Das Schwarze Auge* (The Black Eye), this deep CRPG features more than 50 different skills and 80 different spells for characters to learn and draw upon. Further, the characters may also have negative attributes (phobias, avarice, bad tempers, etc.) which, in turn, enliven the possibilities for interaction within the adventuring party.

MicroProse plans to offer two full-

blown CRPG experiences in the Fall. Our initial impressions of the first, *BloodNet*, are extremely positive. The backgrounds are surreal, the story has gothic overtones, and the high concept is cyberpunk meets vampiric lore. The hero(?) is an ace hacker who has lost all contact with reality, constantly confusing cyberspace and reality. A rogue scientist outfits his brain with a neural implant that helps, but he becomes a mercenary, scrounger and "cowboy."

It turns out that the protagonist has Hopkins-Breese syndrome, and when properly inducted into the creatures of the night, becomes a vampire. So, this game forces one to dance the outlaw ritual of cyberspace and figure out how to slake one's blood in "socially acceptable" ways enough to keep one's humanity level at an operable point. *BloodNet* also features the most beautiful presentation of cyberspace we have seen yet in a computer game.

The second is being developed by Xanth. Entitled, *Secret of the Seventh Labyrinth*, the game builds upon the mythologies and cultures of seven ancient civilizations. The player's goal is to become the philosopher-king of Lemuria by successfully completing seven different dungeons. The action occurs from a first-person perspective and the emphasis in the game, with regard to both special effects and play, is on magic.



Dynamix' *Betrayal at Krondor*

Strategic Simulations, Inc. and Event Horizon have been working on another interesting collaboration. This time, the name of the game is *Dungeon Hack*. This game is similar to *Rogue* in that it is replayable, but features much hotter graphics. However, not only is the dungeon created randomly, but the program gives the player a code so that he/she can replay the dungeon as another type of character or give the code to a friend so that the friend can experience the same dungeon.

Psygnosis intends to provide multi-player role-playing for 1-4 players using one computer. Their game, *Hired Guns*, puts players in the role of space opera mercenaries. The crew is hired to rescue hostages that are members of an extremist political group and are being held by a rival group of extremists. The game sys-

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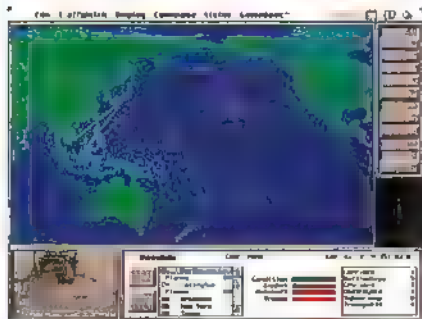
tem is skill based, but skills do not increase as one plays. The good news for "back and slash" gamers, though, is that there are more than 1.7 million cubic meters of battle area (fortunately, it's automapped as one plays) with 20 different areas to fight through.

Meanwhile, gamers can celebrate the release of New World's long awaited *Might & Magic: Dark Side of Xeen*, the CRPG that allows role-players to travel back and forth between *Clouds of Xeen* and the current product. Gametek's *Daemonsgate*, the huge CRPG that was delayed by Hurricane Andrew's importunate appearance, has yet to arrive.

The Caissons Keep Rolling (Wargames)

Sound may be one of the most obvious advancements in the next crop of wargames. SSI's *Clash of Steel*, QQP's *World War II: Battles of the South Pacific*, and Three-Sixty Pacific's *Victory At Sea* on the MS-DOS platform, and Koei's *PTO* (Pacific Theater of Operations) on the Sega Genesis all had enhanced sound effects; many that made us feel as though they were watching war movies instead of playing wargames.

Perhaps the most significant trend within the wargaming genre, however, is the polarization in terms of difficulty level. The game designs are tending to



Three-Sixty's *Victory At Sea*

gravitate toward the poles of lower and higher complexity with fewer games of medium complexity in the center (where more wargames used to be).

Games at the lower level of complexity include: QQP's *World War II: Battles of the Pacific*, Koei's *PTO* (Sega only), Koei's *Genghis Khan II* (SNES and Sega), Milton Bradley's *Axis and Allies* (CD-I only), Hasbro's *Stratego* (coming soon to a popular online network), Elpin Systems' *Conquer For Windows*, Impressions' *Global Domination*, SSG's *Warlords II* (with lots of new units, an optional *Empire*-style black map, graphs/charts, and a new economic system without adding to the complexity of the game) and New World's *Empire De-*

luxie (Macintosh) and the *Empire Deluxe Scenario Disk* featuring "celebrity" designed scenarios.

At the higher level of complexity, Three-Sixty's *High Command*, Gary Grigsby's *War in Russia* from SSI, Three-Sixty's *Harpoon II* and *V for Victory: Gold*Juno*Sword*, Changeling Software's *Pax Imperium*, SSG's *Carriers at War Construction Kit* (as well as *CAW II*), and Ed Grabowski's *The Blue & The Gray* from Impressions all appear to be oriented toward the advanced player.

In the middle of the spectrum, it looks like *Sid Meier's Civil War* from MicroProse will be the game to beat. Sid's emphasis on design elegance and playability



Impressions' *Blue and Grey*

will make the game an interesting stretch for beginning players and a solid challenge for advanced players. Another middle complexity game (in this case because of the less-than-intuitive interface) is *Fields of Glory*, the MicroProse import about Waterloo.

MicroProse also plans to hit the center with *Master of Orion*, a 4E space empire game (explore, expand, exploit and exterminate) with ten different alien races. Impressions has taken a different tack in the space conquest arena with *When Two Worlds War*. The latter features three different modes of play: real-time, "I go, you go," and a stop/go play mode.

Connectivity is also still an issue in the wargame arena. Impressions put a stop/go play mode into their *When Two Worlds War* game and made it modem compatible. *Siege: Walls of Rome*, Mindcraft's historical version of *Siege*, should feature modem-play using the expansion disk from the original *Siege*. Three-Sixty's *V for Victory: Operation Market Garden* will be modem-compatible when the patch disk comes out. Further, *Conquer for Windows* will allow modem play. What is conspicuous by its absence is any plan for Sid Meier to include modem play in his upcoming civil war game.

Play By-E-mail board wargamers will revel in the fact that HPS Simulations is coming to an agreement with several boardgame manufacturers concerning the publication of special PBEM kits for favorite boardgames in the genre. We also

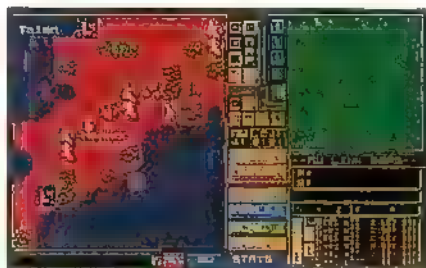
hear that HPS is sprucing up their *Point of Attack* game.

So, is It Party Time?

As usual, there simply isn't enough room in the first half of the CES report to give the genre-by-genre rundown of all the game types which CGW covers. Action, adventure, simulation, strategy, and sports gamers will have to wait for next issue's installment to find out everything in store for them. However, there is a reasonable indication that this could also be the consumers' year to party, as well as the publishers'.

One reason for consumers to rejoice is that the companies are beginning to consolidate technologically from the last leap. The games look like they are going to be more polished. The publishers seem to really care about getting the bugs out and managing the development process more efficiently.

Another reason for consumers to rejoice is that the companies are, in general, listening to what they are saying. They are following up successful products like *SimCity* with a *SimCity 2000* that incorporates a phenomenal amount of gamers' suggestions for improvement. They are following up games like *Indy 500: The Simulation* with the next generation, *IndyCar Racing*, fulfilling a "wish list" for the satisfied owners of the original. They are taking games like *MechWarrior*, with its established following, and making it more than one better by getting fanatical *BattleTech* fans to produce the amazing *MechWarrior II*.



Impressions' *When Two Worlds War*

In short, the most marvelous aspect of this year's Summer Consumer Electronics Show seems to be that there was less sizzle (since most of the products were beginning to use similar tools, techniques and touches) and more steak (since we kept hearing designers and producers talk more about game play than usual). If game play is really going to be taken seriously during the next era of computer game development, it will definitely be party time for the consumers. Hey, let's throw an editor against the velcro wall and see if he sticks! It is party time! CGW

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Sam Enchanted Evening

CGW Visits LucasArts for an S&M Orgy¹

A few years ago, we discovered a comic book from Comico that featured a team of sardonic, wise-cracking detectives. To be precise, this detective team consisted of a dog named Sam and a rabbit named Max. The two detectives were to Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade what Maxwell Smart and Agent 99 were to James Bond and Miss Moneybags — well-meaning bumbles who lucked into success in the most unlikely ways.

The comic book was *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* by Steve Purcell, and the artwork within the book was often as colorful and bizarre as the situations in which the dog and rabbit found themselves. The highlight of the first S&M comic we saw, however, was not one of the stories. It was a boardgame (in the racetrack genre where one tries to go around the oval before one's competitors can accomplish the same revolution) which satirized those cross-country trips where children are mesmerized by billboards about weird roadside attractions which are "only 37 miles ahead" and count down every 1/2 mile. Turns could be lost due to visiting the World's Largest Ball of Twine or having to dine with the other galloping gourmets at Snookies (the omnipresent souvenir stand *cum* restaurant). The game, laid out in the center of the comic book, was even funnier than the rest of the book.

So, imagine our surprise and delight



One team tries to solve a puzzle together.

when we found out that LucasArts was going to do a graphic adventure called *Sam & Max Hit The Road*. The adventure starts out in the dilapidated nouveau Chandler office of Sam & Max and takes the gamers through the under-side of America's

roadside attractions. From Twine Peaks (the aforementioned ball of twine) through a celebrity vegetable museum, and on past a combination alligator farm/miniature golf course, this game is weird. Of course, one would expect it to be.

Let the Orgy Begin

Since we were all excited about the game, LucasArts allowed us to experience one of the events that makes their graphic adventures special — the pizza orgy. As each graphic adventure is coming together with story, puzzles, interface and combination pencil scans/placeholder art, the company invites employees and spouses to attend an after-work pizza party. The company provides soft drinks and pizza, while just about everyone who has not been working on the game tries to play it in its rough form. The company places nearly every available computer in a common room, and everyone starts to gather around during the latter hours of the work day. People grab computers and start to play. Some tag-team to see how many puzzles they can solve before the design team calls time-out and tries to gauge the reactions of their "friendly" playtesters, while others try to make a go of it as individuals.

As they play the game, some of the "rooms" or "locations" are completely finished with full-color backgrounds and animated characters. Some locations, however, are merely pencil sketches with the "hot spots" for the puzzle solutions



Steve Purcell 'highway surfs' with his pals, Sam & Max.

programmed roughly into the scene. None of the documentation is completed, so the designers circulate around the room helping some of the players get started and offering hints on certain puzzles to those who are stuck. By noting the things which are giving the players difficulty, they then have an opportunity to make some of the puzzles more intuitive or to clean up the interface.

Having the pizza orgy on the schedule also serves another purpose. It encourages artists/programmers to work a little extra in order to get as much of the game completed as possible. We heard of at least two programmers who had worked non-stop for more than 24 hours prior to the orgy, just to make sure that some clever animation was integrated into the program and working properly.

On the night we visited, Hal Barwood (currently working on another high-profile LucasArts project) was playing the game in his office (down the hall from the meeting room where most of the rest of us were involved). He wasn't being anti-social, however, since he would pop into the room every 10 minutes or so with a suggestion or a question. Watching Hal at work underscored the significance of this event.

Here were industry experts and virtual game novices experiencing a work-in-progress for the first time, with the former providing their insights as valuable, but free, consulting, and the latter assisting tremendously in making the interface more friendly and the puzzles more fair.

¹ Sam & Max Pizza Orgy, that is.

Here were marketing, sales, programming and artistic personnel gathering together to meet their diffuse agendas. No wonder the design team was just a bit nervous as they watched their peers play the game.

With *Sam & Max*, the team was probably a bit more nervous than usual. The familiar S.C.U.M.M. (Story Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) interface has been significantly changed. Now, the animated on-screen figures are larger and the



Sam & Max's Freelance Playtesters

commands are icon-based. The latter pop-up as the user requires them. By the end of the night, the players' comments about the new interface served to reduce the number of clicks that gamers will have to use in the finished copy of the game.

Another reason the designers were concerned about the interface was the fact that the gamer no longer directly chooses what he/she will say as Sam or Max. Instead, the gamer picks an icon which represents the general feeling of how he/she wants the conversation to go. Then, when Sam or Max makes a caustic remark with



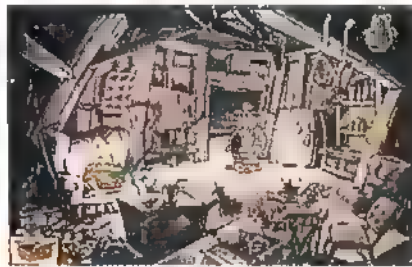
The Gator Golt Puzzle in pen and ink with Sophia as a place holder

lots of humor, it is much fresher than if the gamer read through all of the possible responses in advance, as was the case in the earlier S.C.U.M.M. adventures. Everyone concurred that this was the perfect solution for a Sam & Max game (since a lot of the humor to be found in the comics, as well as the game, is to be found in Max's comments), as well as other games which rely on a witty repertoire.

We also thought the dynamic between the pizza orgy testers and the design team

was interesting on another front. Several of those who played the game were concerned about some of the profanity in it. Even though Sam & Max look cuddly, the comic characters themselves are rather worldly in their perspective and the humor is more entertaining to an adult audience (i.e. late adolescence through hip old geezerhood). One of the challenges brought out during the conversation was the fact that the design team is going to have to be true to the comic book origins of the characters (with their occasional bursts of street lingo) without offending (too much) those who buy the game thinking that the cuddly-looking detectives represent a family game.

Other discussions during the pizza orgy surrounded the non-traditional elements of the adventure. *Sam & Max Hit The Road* is not just a graphic adventure; it's a toybox for warped adults. Some segments feature Sam and Max paper dolls, a highway surfing arcade sequence, a built-in screen-saver, and a game that is something like battleship (but features weird playing pieces). This is because Sean Clark and Mike Stemmle are real fans of Purcell's denigrating duo and noticed



Sam and Max question a suspect in an ink test background

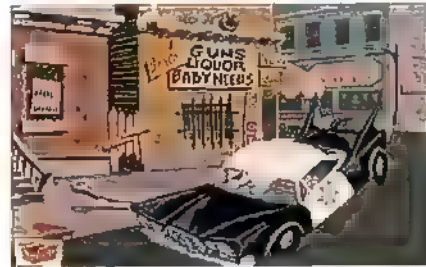
that there were goofy little activities in many of the *Sam & Max* comics. So, they added the same type of extras to the game.

By Design

The highlight of the evening for us was meeting the design team. Steve Purcell created the zany shamuses (shami?) as a way of doing non-superhero comic books. He had drawn typical comic books, including a stint for Marvel on *Animax* and *The New Mutants*, but he wanted to do something a little zanier. We originally thought that Purcell was going to design the game, since he has worked as an artist on several of the LucasArts games since *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, including the hilarious Grog machine ending to the original *Secret of Monkey Island*. As it turns out, however, Purcell does contract work for LucasArts and the game project requires full-time attention.

So the company recruited Sean Clark,

their versatile programmer who worked on everything from the *Passport to Adventure* Comdex demo disk (Fall, 1990) through CD-conversions with multiple languages to *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*. In addition, they tapped Mike



It's a wonderful day in the neighborhood.

Stemmle, who also started on *Passport to Adventure*, but moved on to become lead programmer on *Fate of Atlantis*, as well as *Sam & Max*. In turn, the two designers have read every possible *Sam & Max* comic and scripted the game based on situations that they believed would fit the *SeM* universe. They write out the dialogue and situations and present them to Steve. Steve checks them out with regard to the verisimilitude toward his created universe and often suggests even funnier and wackier dialogue.

We were impressed with how smoothly the trio work with each other, and Steve, in particular, seemed to feel very proud of the game. As for the pizza orgiasts, they seemed pleased with the game, too. As we left the LucasArts building, some of them were still trying to finish the game in its rough-cut form.



Sam and Max explore a trailer in another pencil test

The pizza orgy idea is an excellent one. It subjects the design team's work to the scrutiny of their peers before they have the ego-risk of presenting the game to a focus group, and it provides a sense of company unity to have almost everyone playing the games as they are developed. In fact, there is only one drawback for us. How are we ever going to be able to play *Sam & Max Hit The Road* without having the urge to binge on pizza? Perhaps we'll end up in the next game as the World's Chubbiest Editorial Staff. **CEW**

Virgin Bets With The Winners In Las Vegas



The Dune II Design Team



The Kyrandia I Design Team

Westwood Studios Partnership Hits Jackpot

Tell a person who doesn't know anything about computer games that you are going to take a tour of Westwood Studios, and it is very likely that they will ask what movies they have made. The company's name simply sounds like a motion picture studio or, at the very least, like a recording studio or an animation house. Indeed, since so many technologies are converging in order to make computer games, visiting Westwood Studios is much like visiting a factory for other entertainment media.

One is liable to encounter traditional light tables for animation in the art department, black and white storyboards posted on office walls, and offices with equipment for composing/recording music and sound effects. Another office has been completely remodeled so that it looks like a theatrical stage set (artist Eric Gooch does set-design, as well). In fact, Westwood even has its own art museum, a collection of paintings, and one "statue" (actually a life-size stuffed doll). To be sure, one also finds the ubiquitous cubicles full of programmers, producers, writers, testers and support staff to be found at other companies, but one gets the feeling that Westwood's people are treated as artists, not merely as employees.

Westwood Ho!

Westwood Studios began as a small development house in 1985. Brett Sperry, the current president, and Louis Castle, Vice-President of Creative Development, founded the company and have always been aggressive in their business plan. In the early years, the company regularly bit off more than they could chew. Toward the close of the decade, they were considered notorious for missing milestones, that is, being late with product. In fact, CGW Editor Johnny Wilson used to regularly greet Castle by saying, "Missed many milestones lately, Louis?" Castle always took the ribbing more good-

naturedly than he should have and would always assure Wilson that they were getting more on-track all the time.

By 1992, just before Westwood became an affiliated publisher with Virgin, the situation had so reversed itself that many publishers would assure CGW that a project was going to be completed on time *because* Westwood was doing it. Now, Westwood not only has a solid reputation for getting product out on time, but a reputation for *good* product. Between the development of the first two *Eye of the Beholder* titles for SSI, *Dune II* for Virgin, and *Legend of Kyrandia* under their own label, they have developed plenty of admirers. In fact, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, it is noteworthy that a significant number of software publishers have found themselves targeting Westwood and their new technologies in order to emulate those innovations in their own products.

Tour de Source

Westwood is housed in a new office/industrial park near Las Vegas' McCarron Airport. Like most software companies, its offices cover more than one floor of work space. The bottom floor serves as



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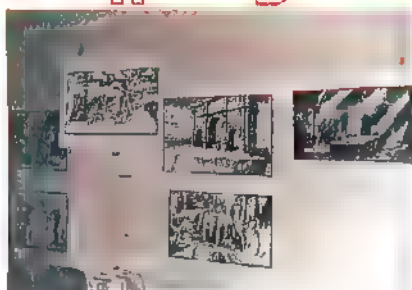


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Storyboards for Kyrandia II

headquarters for programmers, producers, executives, support personnel and the all-important network server, while the upper floor provides for artists, sound engineers, testers and other programmers.

Like most software companies, Westwood maintains its projects via a computer network. Their network capacity is seven gigabytes and everyone keeps touch via e-mail. The network is the repository of libraries of software tools for the company, and actual game-related files of code, text and art are kept in project-oriented directories with restricted access on a "need to work" basis.

Of the 50 or so employees at Westwood, up to 20 of them are usually artists. According to Casile, up to 10 artists can be working on a given project at one time. According to Castle and Mike Legg, producer of *Kyrandia 2*, the company's products have become so art-intensive that they are becoming increasingly storyboard controlled. This evolved largely from the fact that they had to cut so much art of the original *Legend of Kyrandia* that they decided to change the procedure.

Now, the artists are given a detailed written spec about what is going to happen in each of the game's "chapters" (*Kyrandia 2*, for example, has seven game chapters). The artists return to Legg and Castle with thumbnail sketches and, once they are approved, they move on to the pencil sketches. These, in turn, are scanned, put into the program and tested. Finally, the animation sequences themselves are pencil-tested with a frame-flipping procedure and put into the program. If the backgrounds and animation sequences look right at this point, they are re-scanned and repainted in order to give the impression of software that has been handpainted pixel by pixel.

Castle's right-hand man in art is Rick Parks. Rick is a well-known Amiga artist whose current project is developing lots of interesting "morphing" sequences for their upcoming adventure, *Lands of Lore*. He has opted not to use "off the shelf" morphing software for the magical transformations in *Lands of Lore*, even though

such software is much more efficient than the frame-by-frame approach he is using. He insists that, even though a full day's work can be over in one second of game play, the gamer can tell the difference. Combine Parks' efforts with those of Louise and Larry Miller, classically trained animators who have worked respectively for Hanna-Barbara and Filmmation, and Disney and Filmmation, and one has an animation team that would be tough to beat.

In addition to animated "morphing" sequences for *Lands of Lore*, Parks is experimenting with both light-sourcing and hue-sourcing for *Kyrandia 2*. A nifty fog effect is also expected to appear in one or both of the games. Such efforts are a testimony to the graphic efforts being undertaken at today's Westwood Studios.



Larry Miller works at his light table.

One of the side benefits of Westwood's recent move into larger quarters was a room that could be converted into an art museum. It gives the artists a chance to show off some of their non-game efforts and provides an interesting ambience for the upper floor. Portraits, landscapes, still lifes and a rather unusual sculpture all add to the upbeat spirit of "The Westwood Collection."

The Sounds of Violence

Another portion of the upper floor serves as the sound wing. Most of this wing is packed with a typical collection of sound mixing equipment, computers and microphones. One office, however, houses composer Frank Klepecki, the composer of 90% of Westwood's musical scores. Klepecki still has his own performing group, but spends most of his time before the synthesizer keyboard in his office at Westwood. Most of his works are composed on the keyboard and converted to code using AdLib's off-the-shelf *Visual Composer*.

Another office belongs to Pat Collins. His area looks like we would have expected Phil Spector's old Wall of Sound (a "garage"-style recording studio that was refurbished into a hit factory in the early '60s) to look. With eggshell padding as wallpaper and acoustical everything-

else, his office serves as the command center where DAT tapes are sampled and converted to code. Even with all of the effort made on the acoustics in Pat's office, most of the voice acting has to be recorded in a real studio and sampled at Westwood.

This is a Test

Interestingly enough, even though both Nintendo and Virgin (Westwood's major cartridge and disk-based distributors, respectively) put Westwood's products through their own testing departments, Westwood has its own testing department. Louis Castle explains that this is worthwhile for two reasons. First, their in-house testers provide instant feedback. Obviously, this allows the programmers to fix the bugs faster. Second, fixing those earlier bugs means that they are sending cleaner programs to the outside testers, so the programs are approved faster by Nintendo and Virgin. Naturally, this tighter testing process has helped Westwood's reputation in moving from a developer that misses milestones to a publisher that can be counted on.

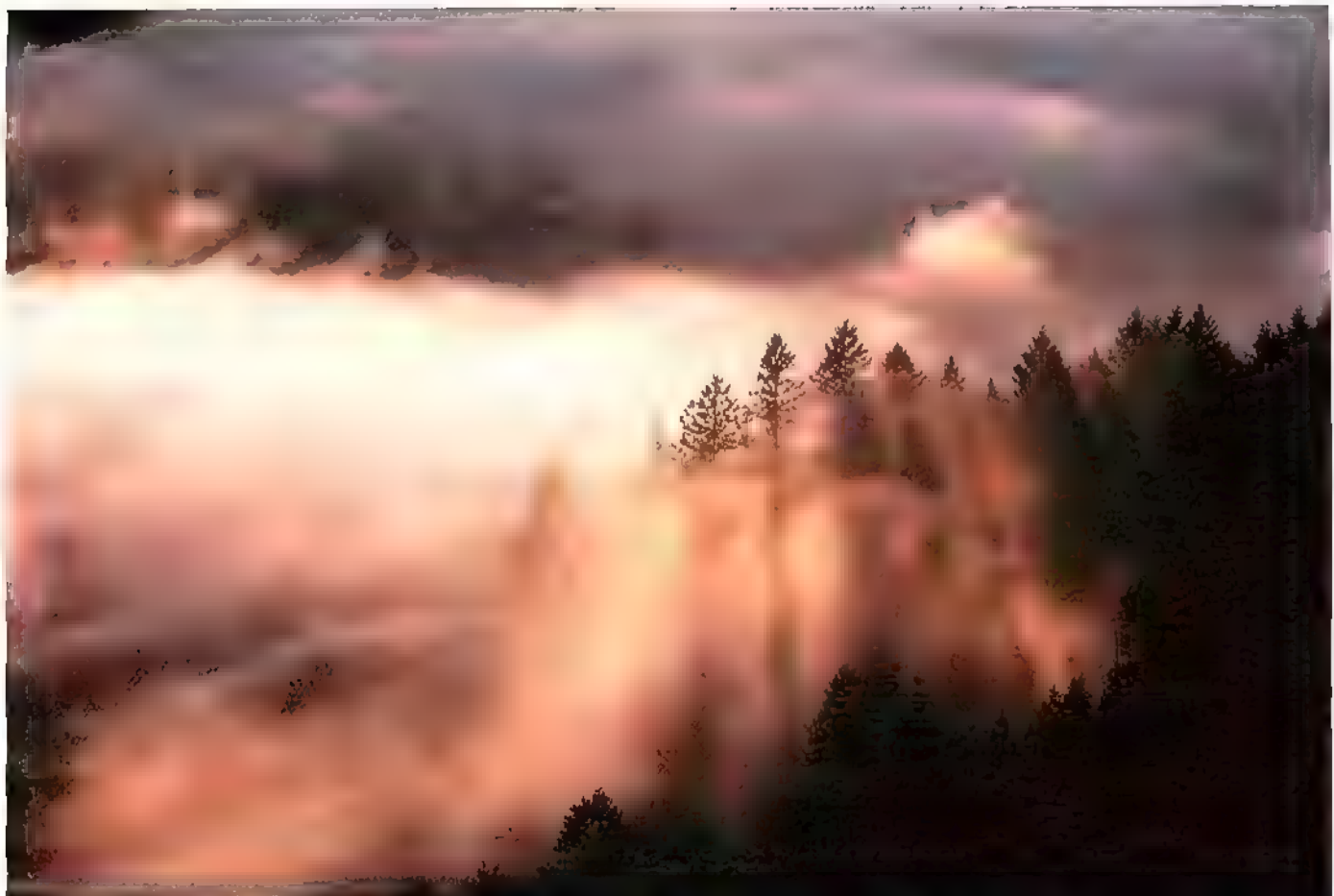
That's a Wrap

We closed out our tour of Westwood in their break room. It doesn't have a commissary like the studios in Hollywood, but it has a full assortment of classic coin-op machines. Indeed, many of the Westwood employees have become quite expert at the classics, largely because these machines no longer require coins. They



The "statue" examines a colleague's piece.

are provided as freebies which allow for the employees to relax and take a break. In fact, that's what we did when we got to the break room. After all, we had to have something to do until Westwood actually releases the fascinating games which they were working on during our tour. **CSW**



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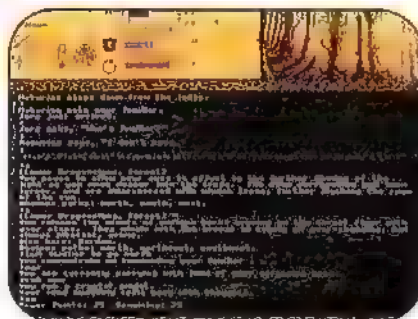
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Hungary's Capitalists

Novotrade Bolsters Its Image Here And Abroad

Many CGW readers have probably played computer games programmed in Eastern Europe without realizing it. Hungarian-based Novotrade developed *Bugs Bunny's Cartoon Workshop* (Hi-Tech Expressions), *Mickey's Jigsaw Puzzles* (Walt Disney Software), *Wilson Pro Staff Golf* (Konami), *California Pro Golf* (Virgin) and *Impossible Mission II* (Epyx), as well as a host of conversions for nearly every publisher in the industry. Naturally, we were curious as to how such an international relationship developed and found that the story began in 1981.

This was the year in which Jack Tramiel (still at Commodore) was going to build the C-64 into the global machine. As part of his plan, he met a Hungarian expatriate who had founded a software company by running a contest on Hungarian television. This businessman, who already owned a large import/export company, used the entries from the contest to form the initial catalog for the new software company. Andras Csaszar won the contest with *Caesar the Cat* for the C-64.



Peter Pan's
Coloring Book Adventure



Csaszar is now one of the principal partners in Novotrade International, the current configuration of the company. His partner is Stephen Friedman, a former marketing executive with Dr. Dobbs Journal of Software Tools, who became Novotrade's U.S. representative in 1983. Friedman says that he took the position because he "really wanted to be involved in international software." Now, he is involved in a major way.

From 1983 to 1989, the company basically programmed conversions. This was ideal because they were engineers, not artists. Ironically, the first conversion contracts were not from Commodore, but from Atari. The game company hired Novotrade to convert their coin-op games to the Atari ST and paid a "lavish" sum of under \$10,000. As Friedman explains, "We could only get low-priority projects on lots of platforms. We really weren't first line, but we consistently upgraded our engineering."



Now, Novotrade consists of a unit in Budapest (called The Studio) that employs 25 people under seven project leaders. Each project team is responsible for two or three projects and, in a spirit of capitalism that would have been unheard of in the Hungary of a little over a decade ago, the teams are given incentive bonuses to finish those projects as part of Novotrade's commitment to follow-through with their commitments.



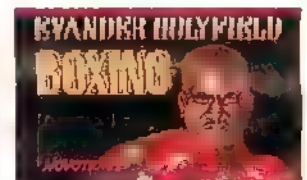
Peter Pan development group with the publisher of Richard Scarry's Busytown for Paramount



Ecco the Dolphin was the company's first original bestseller, and Friedman is confident that more are on the way. "Our frontline products are just beginning to come out," claims Friedman. With games like *Richard Scarry's Busytown* (Paramount), *Peter Pan's Coloring Book Adventure* (EA Kids) and

Deep Space Nine (Playmates) on the docket, we tend to agree. Many of these projects will take advantage of Novotrade's close proximity to three major animation studios in Hungary.

We were curious about the logistics of having a production house in Europe and a sales office in the U.S. First, we asked if communications were handled in English or Hungarian. We were told that almost all of the studio's employees speak some English and that the company provides English classes for them. Occasionally, an interpreter must be used to translate detailed design documents, but most of the business is handled in English.



Then, we asked Friedman if they used air courier to get updates of programs under development or modem uploads. We were told that modem connections have been getting better since late 1990, but the Hungarian phone system is still abominable. New modem technology with error-correction capacity has made a big difference, however.

Now, both Friedman and Csaszar live in the U.S. This means that the former makes about three trips per year to Hungary and the latter treks to Budapest about four times per year. Meanwhile, Novotrade continues to develop frontline products and we would predict, though there are no specific plans, that titles under their own label will start to appear within a couple of years. CGW





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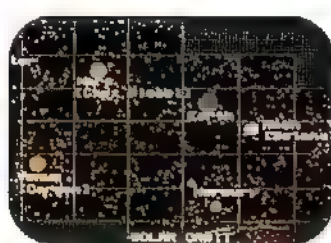
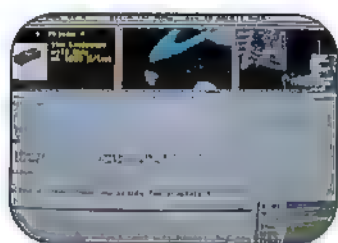
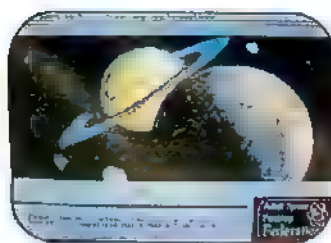
Of course, there's a lot of bargaining, buying and bulling that goes into it. We're social creatures, after all.

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More Hijinx with the Class of '93

Part II of CGW's Computer Game Developers Conference Coverage

Last issue, we compared the annual gathering of artists, composers, designers, producers, programmers and technicians to a combination graduation/homecoming and presented part of our report as though it were a high school yearbook. This issue, we want to concentrate on our lecture notes. Of course, in our coverage, as in actual school, there is always a lot of kidding in the halls before class starts.

This year, a lot of the kidding was at Dani (nee' Dan) Buntin's expense. Dani says she has made the transition from guy



Roe Adams (right), co-designer of *Wizardry IV: Return of Werdna*, scopes out the program possibilities with CGW's Alan Enrich.

to doll...er...male designer to female designer in order to redress the imbalance of male/female designers in the industry and add to the general aesthetic of the designer community. Naturally, this means that Dani won hands down in the informal CGW poll to determine which game designer would be most likely to appear on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*.

One designer insists that Mike Berlyn (*Infidel*, *Altered Destiny*, *Bubsy*) is the designer most likely to be mistaken for Thing One and Thing Two in Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*. Another made fun of *Lords of the Rising Sun* and *Return to Zork* designer Doug Barnett, claiming that he is the designer most likely to be arrested because he was once mistakenly picked up

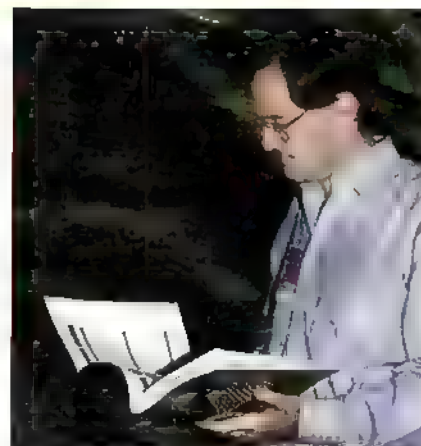
by the police. Producer Jeff Johannigman (Epyx, Electronic Arts, *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Dynamix, MicroProse and more) was tweaked in one response because of his propensity for changing jobs. Someone suggested he would be arrested for indecent exposure while changing jobs in a phone booth. Another suggested that composer George "The Fat Man" Sanger would most likely be arrested for excessive glare from his wardrobe, and a wag with a long memory suggested that Roberta Williams (*Mystery House*, *King's Quest I-VI*, *The Colonel's Bequest*, etc.) would be the victim of a Pat Buchanan-led inquisition in which an early Sierra advertisement would be unearthed as grounds for initiating a cultural war. Of course, there were also the jokes that *shouldn't* be printed.

The 7th Guest

A popular lecture was Graeme Devine's presentation on *The 7th Guest*. More than two years in the making, the game they said was impossible is now shipping. Devine stated that the game was originally inspired by the first episode of *Twin Peaks*. Rob Landeros and Graeme Devine allegedly watched the show and thought of combining David Lynch-style direction and a murder mystery which would take place in a mansion right out of *Parker Brothers' Clue*.

Actually, Graeme observed that their game design was crystallized by the arrival of *Word for Windows*. They started writing up their ideas in a document filled with a variety of fonts, footnotes and every other feature. By the time they were through, the murder mystery was now a ghostly murder mystery. Then, they showed it to their boss at Virgin Games. The bad news was that it led to the end of their employment at Virgin. The good news was that Virgin assisted them in setting up Trilobyte.

When they were ready to start working on the project, they handed their design document over to Matthew Costello (formerly the game columnist for *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*). At that point, they informed Matthew that "We



Eric Goldberg (designer of *Prodigy's The Next President*) checks out the centerfold (schedule) in the CGDC program.

can do anything." They later regretted their open-ended invitation.

Next, they established a design approach: "What would Mom play?" They decided that it needed to be pretty, so they opted for 24-bit color SVGA graphics. Then they decided that the interface had to be as simple as playing cards or using a television remote control. Most importantly, they wanted no menus and no text on the screen at all, because of the low-definition for NTSC television pictures (the game was licensed by Nintendo and is expected to be released on a CD-ROM for that platform, as well as 3DO).

Certain that the game was going to be a full CD disc, they determined early on that music would be a major component of the product. They heard George Sanger's demo tape and hired him immediately. Not only was George so excited about the project that he started composing the music before they finished any of the game, but he was insistent that the game support General MIDI. George got what he wanted, but not before the game expanded to two CDs.

Then, they started to work in earnest. That is when they learned two lessons. In Graeme's own words, "First, CD-ROM is bloody slow. Second, CD-ROM is bloody slow." They also discovered that current resources required about one-half hour to compress one frame of video data. Yet, the worst discovery was just ahead. They budgeted \$5,000 to do a blue-screen video shoot with a hand-held camera. Not only was the budget inadequate for covering even the pre-production costs, but it turned out that the blue screen wasn't quite blue enough. Hence, they had to digitize all of the images and clean up the pictures with *3-D Studio*. Graeme admits that they couldn't get rid of all those ghostly auras, so they made it a feature. "Those are real auras!" said Devine to an amused crowd of developers.

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Naturally, with Trilobyte expending so much effort on the product, they elected to broaden their potential by making the game easily adaptable to several formats. They created the GROOVY language and wrote drivers so that the same disk would run on both an MS-DOS-based and Macintosh platform. In this way, the same data plays in the same way on different systems. This also means that future games will be leveraged against this development system.

Finally, Graeme confessed that one of the original design concepts became problematic. From the beginning of the script, they had intended to use classic puzzle designs and brain-teasers to advance the game. Suddenly, they discovered that they had to get copyright clearance from puzzle and toy manufacturers. Hence, they went back to a 19th century puzzle book in order to get the puzzle designs they wanted.



New World alumni Ron Spitzer (right), former CEO, and Nick Beliaff (center), SSI producer, pose with New World executive Mark Caldwell (left).

By the time the game was released, Trilobyte and Virgin had spent considerably more on development than they had expected. Nonetheless, they need only sell two-thirds of the initial sell-in for the project to hit breakeven.

Multimedia: Revolution or Crock?

[Summary by William C. Fisher of Quicksilver Productions]

CGDC attendees faced several sessions this year which attempted to address the Big Questions of Multimedia. Everyone from Hollywood writers and producers to would-be game programmers and artists is trying to decide who really knows what it's all about. Here are some of those Big Questions, and what developers are thinking:

Will we ever see a multimedia standard on the par of Compact Disc or VHS?

Not likely, at least for a while. One session presenter counted 21 different CD standards (including audio formats). Leaders of the pack are clear, however, from the CD-ROM publishers' stand-

point: IBM PC and Macintosh, Sega Genesis, and perhaps 3DO. Despite Philips' enthusiasm for CD-I and a number of dedicated developers, skepticism persists about its long-term prospects.

How important is Full-Motion Video (FMV)?

FMV certainly adds spice and excitement to many titles. Many "multimedia" consumer hardware producers trumpet the abilities of their systems to produce video-like images on a portion of a video display. At present, however, no commercially available system supports true television-quality images or even full-screen video. This will change slowly over the next few years.

As was noted several times throughout the conference, glitz is nice, but it is no replacement for quality gameplay. FMV is a new and powerful tool for game developers, just as sound and graphics evolved over the past few years, but it has significant limitations. Not all games require FMV to be viable.

Can we really create Interactive Fiction? What's it like?

Today's writers and programmers are struggling to define this nebulous type of future entertainment software. Debate ranged far and wide on the issue, but no coherent vision has yet emerged. Scriptwriters have tried-and-true formulae for creating winning stories. No such formulae exist yet for interactive fiction. No doubt many developers are working today on sophisticated concepts for tomorrow. For now, though, we'll have to wait until these silent geniuses are willing to show their secrets.

Is "multimedia" real?

Yes, and it is achievable in software products using today's technology. Even though we cannot seem to articulate the meaning of this holy grail of software, we all know what we want. We want more engaging, exciting, satisfying entertainment experiences. We know, intuitively, that the experiences we find in today's games are not at the absolute limits of our creative and technological abilities.

We can do better. Most of us cannot yet see the light, but a few visionaries are even now grasping pieces of the vision, integrating it into the products of tomorrow. Think of the current round of products as grand experiments, our first faltering steps toward that brave new world. The confusion of today will evolve over the coming years into many new and exciting products. Now it's up to the computer game designers—the visionaries leading the way—to make it happen.

Computer Games and Art (Greg Johnson, *Starflight*)

Greg Johnson's thesis was that the world at large does not consider computer games to be art and neither do the artists. If one asks whether the computer game "artist" is fulfilled by doing computer games, Johnson contended that the answer would be "No." He suggested that most "artists" working in the computer field find their artistic satisfaction away from work.

The reason for this, observed Johnson,



Early designers gather round to discuss "The Dustbin of Computer Game History."

is that, "The goal of graphics in computer games is generally to: *Show something* (a picture of a person you're talking to, the scene of a room, a landscape or a map). The goal of art is to: *Evoke something* (some sort of emotional response or reaction)." The interaction produced by the latter is to create new connections as one thinks and responds to the work in view of its subtlety, texture, conflict, depth and evocativeness. In the former, such interaction is limited to a functionality (in terms of game mechanics) that precludes, or at least limits, the artist's vision.

Greg noted three criteria for art.

1. The Creator

Art must be an expression of something on the part of the Artist. It must be a concept, mood or emotion—anything that is part of the artist's identity.

2. The Art Itself

It must have a depth and subtlety to it that operates at many different levels at once. It must have an integrity and be "connected" to the world in many different ways such that a person could lose themselves in it.

3. The Person Experiencing It

It must evoke some sort of emotional response in people. It may be very subtle or very blatant, but it must be, in some sense, meaningful and valuable to the person experiencing it.

Having established his criteria, Johnson discussed the plight of the graphic artists who contribute to computer games. He hypothesized a situation where the project

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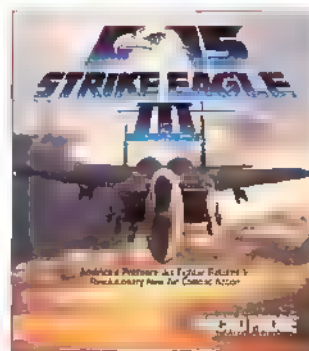
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Actual F-15 Strike Eagle III cockpit screen shot shown.



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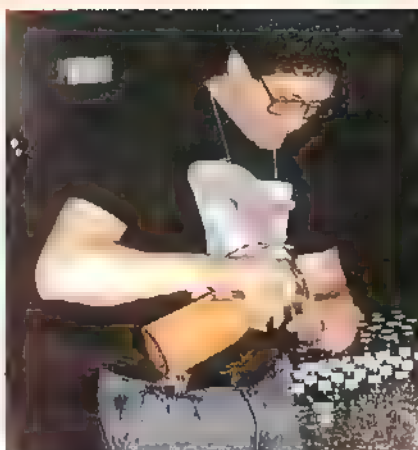
leader tells an artist, "I need a picture of a wizard, a picture of a troll, two Sherman tanks, a tree and a hillside." He continued with another list of "visionary" instructions "...a map, side-view or top-down, with eight frames of a walking figure or 16 rotations of a spaceship. They can be so many pixels high by so many pixels wide and use 16 or 256 colors...and I need it by next Friday."

What he illustrated in this catalog of demands was the reality of piecemeal instructions detracting from the possible implementation of a strong and common creative vision in computer game development, and further, the need for artists to be given some creative authority. He emphasized the need for coordinating the vision of what the game world is like and the philosophy for depicting events in a particular graphic style. This requires decisions prior to actual rendering so that the artistic team knows whether the game's philosophy requires soft focus or sharp contrast, light sourcing, warm/cool colors and partially hidden/candid movement.

Finally, Greg's call to action on allowing more creative authority to the graphic artists was clarified to reveal three reasons to do so.

1. To Fix a Growing Problem

Greg rightly observed that the new storage presentation technologies would al-



William C. Fisher (Quicksilver Software) fortifies himself to sit through yet another multimedia conference.

low interactive experiences to reach a broader audience. In turn, this would engender more money-making potential into the enterprise and, in turn, draw many different types of artistic talent into the field. Unfortunately, this process is creating a growing friction between artists and programmers/producers. Providing creative authority/input from artists would reduce some of this friction.

2. To Attract More Talented Artists

Greg observed that giving artists more creative authority would encourage the

recruiting of more individuals with experience in cinematography, staging, lighting and other fields conducive to using the new technologies. The current status of "artist as underling" is a major barrier in attracting certain types of talent, particularly traditional Hollywood types.

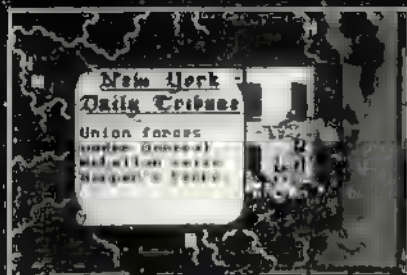
3. To Create New Kinds of Products

Finally, Johnson argued that allowing more creative input from artists in the conception and direction of a product could potentially create, not just prettier products, but new types of products. He closed out his presentation by suggesting that the new "interactive experience" that would make more people want to participate in the genre may well be a more sophisticated weaving together of the old storytelling capacity of traditional technologies with the interaction of computer games. It will take an artistic vision to weave these elements together.

Moving on to New Horizons

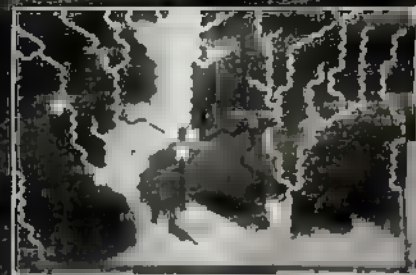
These were only a handful of the "class notes" to be taken during the 1993 conference. Readers who find that they are longing for more should pencil in the following dates on their calendar: April 23-26, 1994. That's when the "Class of '94" gathers at the Westin in Santa Clara, California for the eighth meeting of computer game developers. **CGW**

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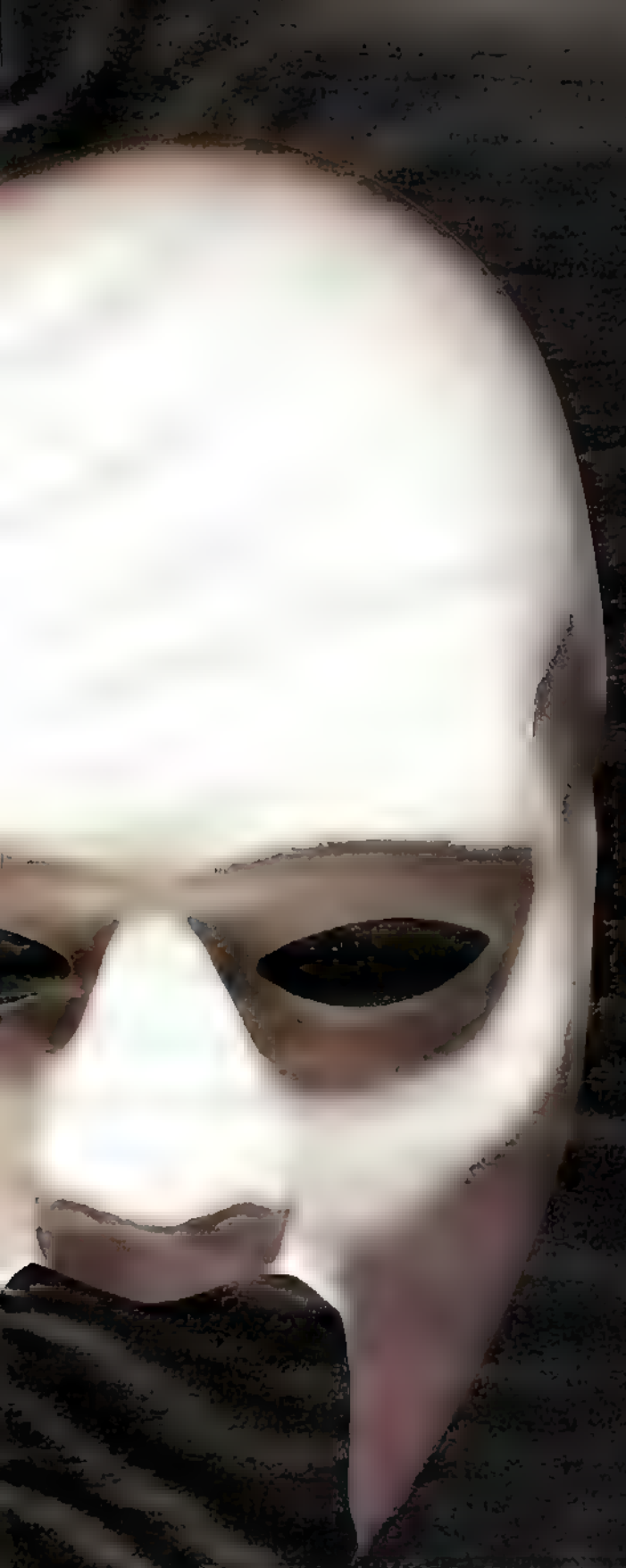
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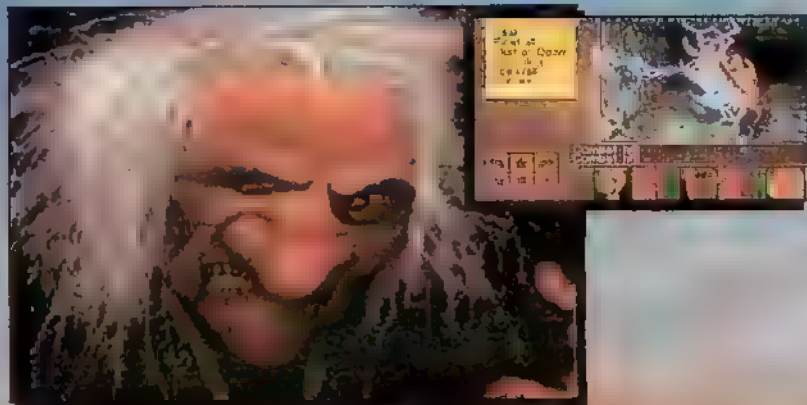
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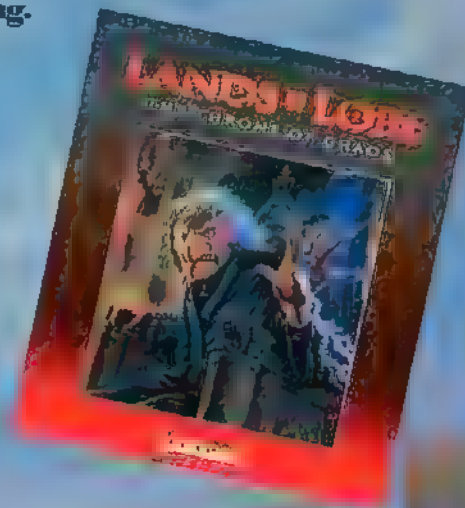
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Scorpion's Mail

Alone in the Dark ■ Ultima VII: Black Gate ■ Ultima VII:
Serpent Isle ■ Ultima Underworld II ■ Eric the Unready
Legend of Kyrandia ■ The Summoning
Crusaders of the Dark Savant

Seems like we were here in the mail room just the other day. (Come to think of it, Fred and I *were* in here just the other day, cleaning up.) Anyway, yes, it's time to go poking through the sacks again and see what the readers have been up to lately (mostly getting stuck somewhere, but we expect that sort of thing by now).

Before we get to the good stuff, I'd like to remind everyone of a couple of things. First, whether you live in the US, or overseas, *please* do not send money in any way, shape or form. No payment is required for answering your letters. Okay? Got that? Even if you're feeling especially generous, keep the money in your pocket (games are expensive; save up for those instead!).

Second, some overseas readers have enclosed a self-addressed envelope with their questions. While this isn't necessary, I appreciate their thoughtfulness in sending one along. However (you knew there was a *however*, right?), you shouldn't put any stamps on the reply envelope. The US Post Office does not accept foreign postage on outgoing mail, only incoming mail. If you are writing from outside the United States and are enclosing a self-addressed envelope, don't put any stamps on it.

One more thing (really, this is the last one): before sending off your letters, do take a moment to make sure everything is correct. One time, a reader put a Nature Conservancy stamp on his SASE, instead of a postage stamp. Another reader was feeling so rushed, he put *my* address on his reply envelope. Just recently, a player was in such a hurry, he left my box number off the address. The letter got to me eventually, but it took awhile. So, however eager you are to get your problems solved, an extra minute for proofreading helps!

Alone in the Dark: Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa (this is the literate way of saying I blew it bigtime). After sending off my article on ATTD, I was in the local computer store one day, browsing the new arrivals rack, when I heard two people talking about the game. They were saying how nice it was that, even though broken, the saber *still worked* as long as you had both pieces. Uh-Oh! That isn't what I said in the article (oops). So, this is a correction: even if you happened to break the sabre while fighting some nasty critter, it will

still perform its special function, provided you've got the two parts. While I do my best to be accurate, on occasion I do (ahem) step in it (and with eight legs...no, let's not think about that!). My apologies to all for this error.

Ultima VII - Black Gate: Some letters have come in recently from readers having trouble with the Emp/Wisp quest. They get all the way to the end of it, signed contract and all, but nothing happens. The Emps appear not to know that the quest has been completed, and therefore don't help with contacting the Wisps. This occurs because the initial trigger for the entire sequence has not been properly set. The actual beginning of this entire section is up in Minoc, at the gypsy camp. Players should go there before visiting Yew.

Ultima VII - Serpent Isle: There are lots of places to go wrong here, or find yourself up against what appears to be a dead end. Moonshade is one of them. The first thing to do on arrival is remind Flindo of his promise to you. Then be patient; don't expect anything to happen right away (these things do take a bit of time to set up). Go back the next day and talk to him again. If you've already been to the banquet and nothing new seems to be happening afterwards, have a chat with Bucia. Be sure to ask her about anyone who's around now that wasn't before. In this game, it is vital to talk to people several times, particularly after special events occur.

Ultima Underworld II: The servant strike is giving some people fits, which isn't surprising. Because of a bug in the game, once the strike starts, there is no way to end it. Nystul is then too weak to do anything with the blackrock stones you bring him, which makes getting on with the game rather difficult. There are three things you can do about this: (1) Start the game over; (2) Restore to a time before the strike and get Lord British to raze the servants' demands "under consideration"; (3) call Origin and ask for the patch that fixes this problem. Do whichever of these is easiest for you, but do avoid the strike.

Eric the Unready: So you're on the way to sacrificing yourself — a typically noble deed for a knight. It would, of course, help if no one noticed you were standing around in the room. This is a sort of half-and-half problem. Half is wet, and half you can't see (well, it's only semi-precious after all, Fro..err, Eric). And it would also help if the young lady in

the room would just shut up and stop screaming. Here you're trying to do her a favor, but that's just not getting through to her. How tiring. Yawn. Think I'll sleep on this one for awhile.

Legend of Kyrandia: The caves in this one continue to give people headaches. Even with the best and most careful mapping, they still find some dark areas that they simply can't cross safely (not to mention that annoying chasm). These places can be entered once the Pantheon has been completed (but you had a suspicion about this already). That, in turn, means getting back out of the caves the way you came in and doing something out there. I'm sure you'll be able to figure out what that is; remember, a wellwisher is rooting for you.

The Summoning: The White Knight has proven to be too elusive for some players. This is probably because he isn't where they think he is. Looking for Whitey on the top level isn't going to get the job done. Try down below (have you been pushing stuff aside lately? If not, do that little thing). That by itself won't be enough, however. Some magic is necessary to bring you to his happy home.

Crusaders of the Dark Savant: Adventurers messing around under Nyctalanth sooner or later come across a chamber filled with nasty, gooey T'rang eggs. They wonder how to get past these horrible things. There's only one way, and that's to join up with the Umpani. The only thing past the eggs is Queenie and friends, and killing them is mainly optional. However, if you are planning on trashing the T'rang Queen, be sure to wait until after she (he?) has told you how to open the Sword Lock, because no one else knows how. And you really do need that Boat Map.

That's it for this look into the mail bag. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

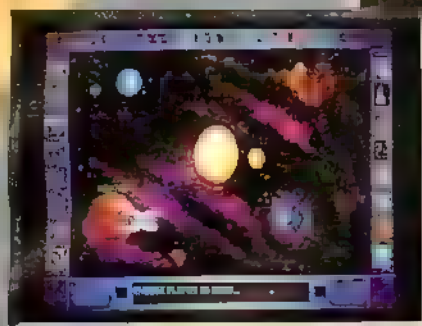
On Delphi: Visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Stop by the Games Round-Table (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO BOX 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **CEW**

STRIKE SQUAD



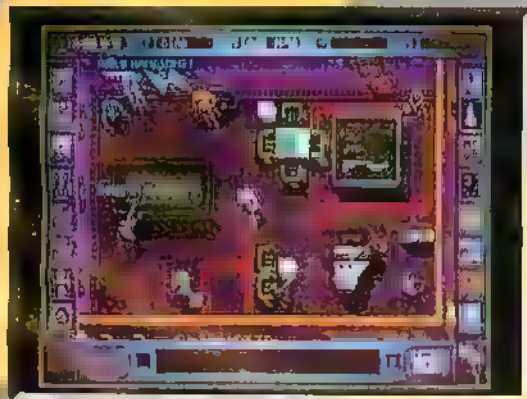
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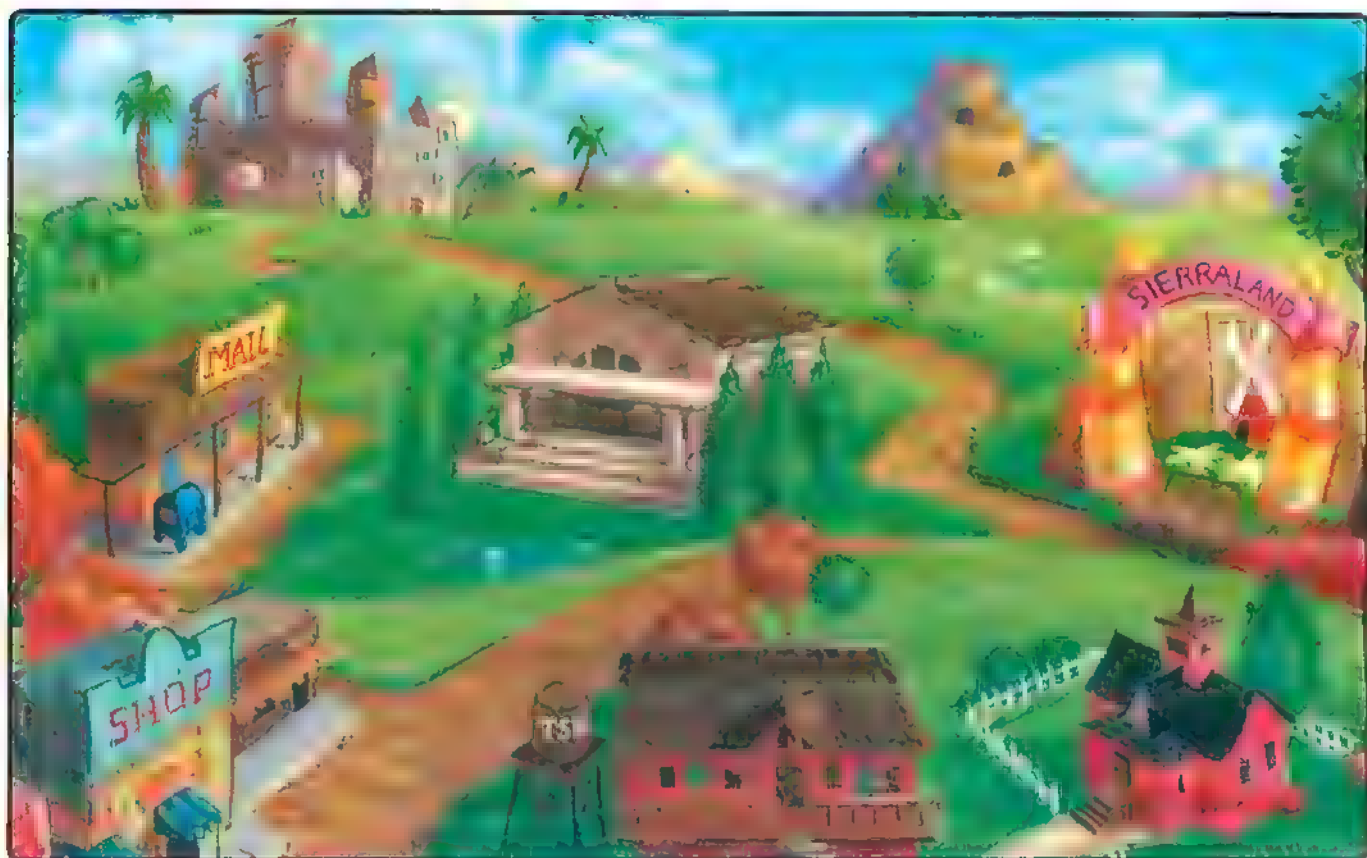
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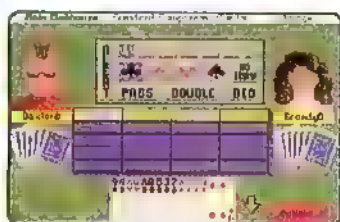
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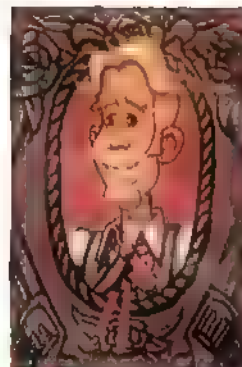
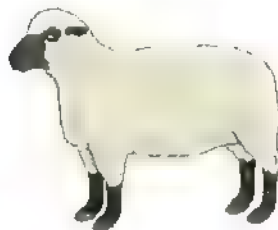
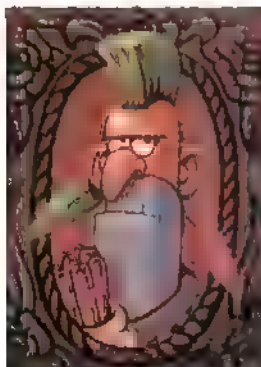
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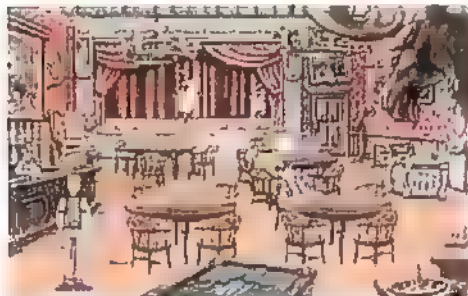
Sheep Shots

Sierra's *Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist*



by Charles Ardai

It is the rare game that can make a jaded player laugh out loud. Rarer still is one that can make a jaded player laugh out loud frequently, and rarest of all is one that can make a jaded player laugh out loud frequently before it is even installed. Until recently, I would have felt comfortable substituting "unheard of" for "rarest of all" — but no longer, not after playing *Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist*, the latest symptom of Al "Creator of *Leisure Suit Larry*" Lowe's dementia.



Freddy Pharkas is the "Blazing Saddles" of computer games. Lowe and co-designer Josh Mandel jump on the Wild West genre and ride it for all it's worth, pinching tropes from every great Western right up to "Unforgiven" and treating them with the disrespect they deserve.

Like Clint Eastwood's character at the end of last year's Best Picture, Freddy Pharkas gives up a life of violence for one of respectability: the ex-gunfighter studies pharmacology and opens his own shop in the wretched

town of Coarsegold, California. Will he, like Clint, eventually have to strap on the ol' spurs and holsters and revert to old ways to see justice done? Do you even have to ask?

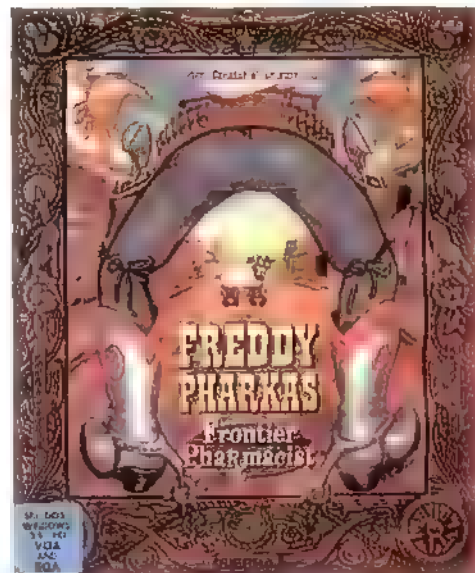
Freddy When You Are

The game opens with a backstory that takes a poke at the "Ballad of Davy Crockett," singing of Freddy's achievements as a youth, the loss of his right ear at the hands of a crackshot villain named Kenny the Kid, his disillusionment with gunfighting, and his decision to become a pharmacist. ("Now our hero, Freddy Pharkas, / With his wounded pride and earless carcass / Vowed to the heavens to give up gunnery...") As the last strains of the catchy theme music dwindle, the player finds him- or herself staring at a sepia-toned Main Street while a toothless Gabby Hayes imitator narrates the start of the adventure, with occasional interruptions for hawking, coughing and forgetting what he has said.

It seems that Coarsegold is mysteriously turning into a ghost town. It already has one foot in the grave, not to mention a crooked sheriff and banker just waiting, if one might mix metaphors, for the other shoe to drop. Actually, not just waiting. Sheriff "Chicken" Shifts and banker P.H. Balance are doing everything they can to hasten Coarsegold's shuffling off of its mortal coil.

This is where our "peerless, earless and free" hero comes in. He has a lovely, colonial-style pharmacy toward the end of Main Street and he does not want to see it shut down. Nor does he want to see all his customers driven out of town. What can he do when the water

supply is poisoned, when rowdy cowhands come in to shoot up the town, when an arsonist torches the Assay Office, when horses stink up the town with their artificially induced flatulence, or when a big-city gambler arrives to cheat people out of their deeds? He



TITLE:
PRICE:
SYSTEM:
REQUIREMENTS:
PROTECTION:
DESIGNERS:
PUBLISHERS:

Freddy Pharkas, Frontier Pharmacist
\$69.95
IBM
286-16Mhz, VGA/EGA graphics
Documentation Look-up
Al Lowe, Josh Mandel
Sierra
Coarsegold, CA
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can roll up his sleeves and get to work, that's what.

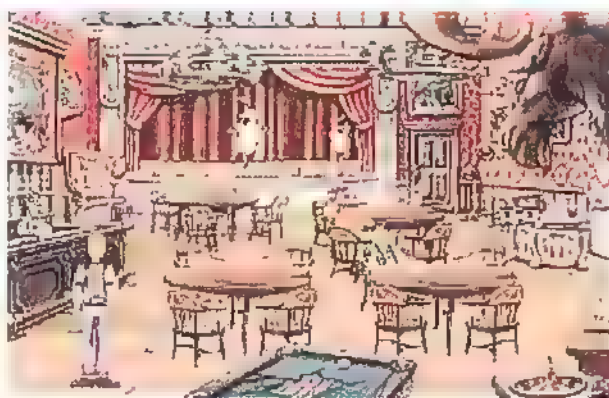
The standard Sierra interface is pressed into service once again, here containing Western-themed icons (a pair of boots for "Walk," a leather strap and buckle for "Inventory," a pair of wire-rimmed glasses for "Look"). These commands function just as their counterparts do in the *King's Quest* and *Space Quest* games, the one new feature being that each icon (and every object in the game) has a hot spot: a brightly colored pixel that indicates which portion of the graphic is "active." This helps eliminate a lot of the fumbling that has made some previous Sierra games frustrating. Never again will one ask "Why can't I pick that up?" while clicking the wrong portion of the hand cursor on an object.

Puzzles consist largely (and unavoidably, given the pure point-and-click interface) of recognizing that certain objects on the screen can be picked up, of picking them up, and then bringing them into contact with other objects. What makes *Freddy Pharkas*'s puzzles much better than the norm is that solutions often contain several steps, forcing the player to think in weird, convoluted ways.

So, for instance, dousing the fire in the Assay Office is not merely a matter of smothering it with the right substance. That would be too easy. Freddy also has to find the right tool to distribute the substance over the area of the fire, another tool to get into position to make the first tool work, and so on. Almost everything Freddy does, from making himself a new car through assembling his gunfighter outfit to diverting a stampede, requires several actions. Each step may be simple and straightforward, but the overall solutions rarely are.

As Pharkas the Eye Can See

All of the game's events take place in the same location, the town. Coarsegold consists of about a dozen exterior screens and roughly the same number of interiors. This may seem small — it *is* small — but it is also a wise tactical choice. The limited number of scenes means that the player has to revisit each location several times. This enriches the simulation, since by the end of the game one really knows the town inside and out. It starts to feel



like home, making the storyline that much more effective. Coarsegold may be a rotten little town, but it is *our* rotten little town, one ultimately feels, and it's worth fighting for.

It is also worth noting that while the environment is small, the game is not short by any means. Divided into four acts, each containing plenty of puzzles and goings-on, *Freddy Pharkas* unfolds at a steady clip and never runs out of material. The limited environment permits Lowe and Mandel to pack the game with more characters, animations, jokes, and music than they would otherwise have had room for. One can spend the first hour of the game just wandering around the town, never even looking for a puzzle to solve, because everything one encounters has a gag (or two or three) attached to it.



It took me more than an hour just to make it all the way to the end of Main Street, because I was having so much fun fooling around in the saloon, the barbershop, the bank, and "Mom's," a homey restaurant run by the mother of all battle-axes. When I finally got to Freddy's pharmacy I realized that I hadn't even started the game yet, in the conventional sense, even though I had been playing and laughing myself sick for quite a while. The game acknowledges this peculiarity of its design when one unlocks Freddy's door. "Congratulations," it says, as 500 points are added to one's score. "You are halfway through the game."

Once one enters the pharmacy, one gets a crash course in Freddy's new profession as a series of townspeople come by to have their prescriptions filled. The player has to learn to manipulate all the tools in Freddy's back

room, following instructions printed in the hilarious "Modern Day Book of Health and Hygiene" that comes with the game. Yes, this is copy protection; but between juggling polysyllabic chemicals and figuring out which compound to mix to address a particular complaint, one forgets that one is also demonstrating that one has a legitimate, and not a pirated, copy of the game. This is the way copy protection should be done, if it must be done at all.

After the first round of prescriptions has been filled, the Sheriff comes by to close the pharmacy down. Not to worry — Freddy can still come and go as he pleases, despite the "CLOSED" sign in the window. (Lowe and Mandel never bother to explain why, if every other closed establishment has its door boarded up, Freddy is allowed to wander in and out of the pharmacy. I guess the answer is, "Because otherwise there wouldn't be a game.")

Freddy's job from this point on is to foil each scheme by Sheriff Shift, P.H. Balance, and an unnamed mastermind lurking in the shadows to drive the townspeople away. Along the way, there's more chemistry to be done, a visit to be paid to an Establishment of Ill Repute, a noble rescue to be performed (not to mention a couple of ignoble ones), and three or four gunfighting sequences offering rudimentary arcade action.

As usual, the action sequences are not the game's strong suit, though they aren't bad. There are better games if one wants target shooting practice. Some gamers might enjoy the interludes but, thankfully, the rest of us are given the option of playing these sequences at a very forgiving "easy" level.

There is no such option for the game's climactic gunfight, but there it doesn't matter so much, since whatever one does, Freddy will end up lying in the dust spouting blood like a geyser. Is this the end of our hero? Or will he struggle to his feet and drag himself to the villain's lair for a showdown?

The Funny Frontier

Actually, the final showdown is surprising and satisfying, though a tad misogynistic, and it brings matters to a smashing finale. In terms of its demands on the player's craftiness, *Freddy Pharkas* maintains a high level right up



to the end. Puzzle hounds will find this game a treat.

However, even the puzzles, as good as they are, are not the game's real strength. Its real strength is its comedy. Though satirizing the Wild West is by no means a new idea, the trail having been blazed by everyone from Mel Brooks to "F-Troop," Lowe and Mandel manage to find new jokes to crack and new ways to crack old ones. One of the weapons in their arsenal is self-deprecating satire. That is, not only do they parody the Wild West, but computer games as well, including a great takeoff on *Lemmings* and cameo appearances by suitably sleazy ancestors of *Leisure Suit Larry* and Cedric, the *King's Quest* owl.

Other gags come out of left field, which is where the best gags tend to be born. Across from the church is the Coarsegold synagogue, which Freddy can't enter because he is not "one of the chosen people." Outside the graveyard is a coffin which, if opened, starts coughin'. Halfway through the game, Freddy finds a faithful Indian companion: Srini Lalkaka Bagdnish. The stampede Freddy has to stop is a stampede of snails. They (the gags, not the snails) come fast and furious.

Nor can one overlook the ever popular toilet humor. Not that anyone in the Wild West had toilets, of course, but there are two out-houses in the game and they get plenty of use. Three puzzles have — how shall we put it?

excretory themes, requiring Freddy to come into contact with substances the rest of us would just as soon not touch. There are lots of jokes about buggery, too: Trixie the Accommodating Sheep is running loose in the streets for much of the game and, for those with more refined tastes, a sheep in heels and makeup is available over at Madam Sadie Ovarce's place.



Let I frighten away sensitive gamers with this description (or Tipper Gore, should she happen to be reading), rest assured that nothing either disgusting or raunchy actually happens on the screen. They're just jokes, folks. Furthermore, Lowe and Mandel are in good company, displaying a coprophilic glee worthy of Jonathan Swift or Laurence Sterne. Given that most people read "Gulliver's Travels," with its dung-smeared yahoos, in school,

no one should complain about *Freddy Pharkas's* flirtation with similar subjects. All great satirists play in the muck. That's their job.

Lowe and Behold

Lots of gamers were unsure whether Al Lowe would be able to top himself. After all, where can one go but down after creating a success like *Leisure Suit Larry*? The answer is now clear: one can go up. *Freddy Pharkas* contains more concentrated hilarity than any of the *Leisure Suit Larry* games, plus better puzzles, great music (one can sample any of a dozen compositions from the piano player in the saloon), art that calls to mind Don Martin's characters from *Mad* magazine, and even (just to put the cherry on top) a funny installation procedure and documentation that would be worth reading even if there were no game to go with it.

Now the question is, where can Lowe go after *Freddy Pharkas*? God only knows, but there is no indication that he is ready to ride off into the sunset. One has to assume that he has more crazy adventures in store for us. For now, however, Lowe can cut another notch in his gunbelt and take a well-deserved rest. Once again he's proven himself the quickest draw in town. **CSW**

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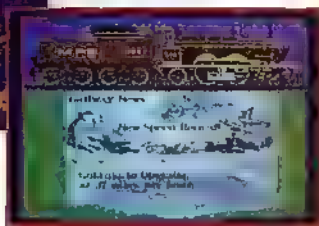
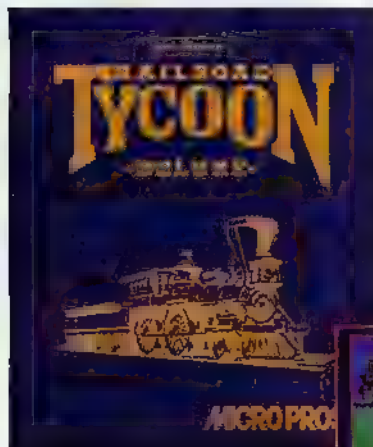
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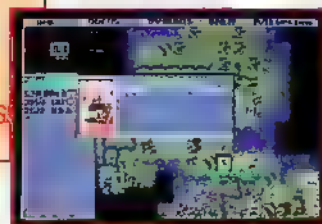
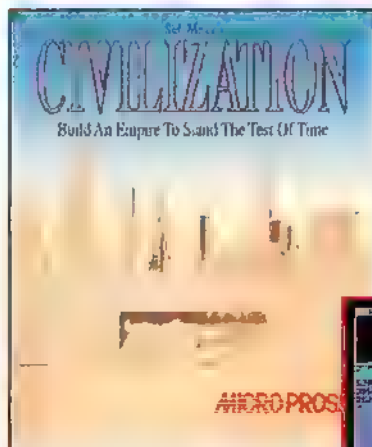
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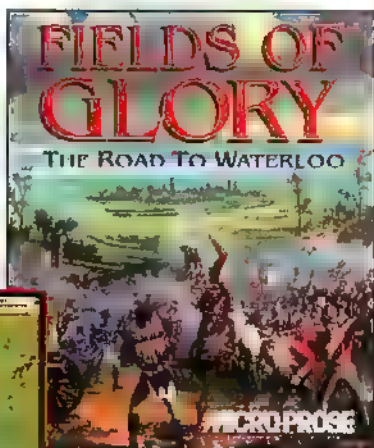
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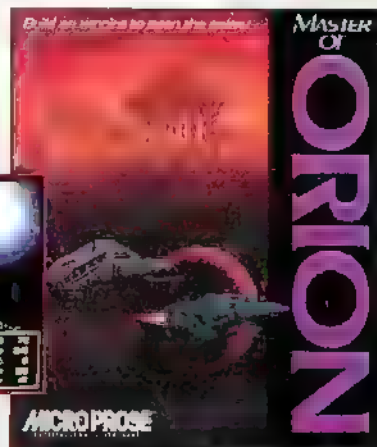
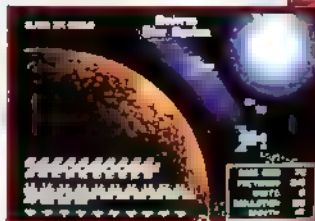
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AAP

The Arrival of a Long-awaited Guest

Virgin and Trilobyte's CD Apparition Finally Appears

by Chuck Miller

Originally scheduled for a Halloween 1992 release, Virgin and Trilobyte's interactive drama, *The 7th Guest* (Guest), has finally arrived — in all its glory and gory regalia. *Guest*, a multimedia showpiece shipping on two CDs, may be a dream come true for most CD-ROM gamers, as there is finally an entertainment title available on this new medium that comes close to fully exploiting its capabilities. However, and I say this after investing an extensive amount of time with the finished product, *Guest* may fall more closely into the category of a nightmare than a dream. On the basis of my experiences in Stauf's Mansion, it appears that this long overdue "guest" arrived just a bit too early, in spite of its numerous delays.

But First, the Story

Over 50 years have passed since the strange events surrounding the Stauf mansion transpired: mysterious circumstances in which six guests disappeared from this infamous Harley residence. Now, with the gruesome death of TV journalist Robin Morales, who vanished during the investigation of the Stauf residence for an upcoming story on *Case Unsolved*, the fervor has once again surfaced in this quiet,

troubled community. Is it possible that after all these years this young journalist discovered something new about this "haunted dwelling" — something that eluded all past investigations and cost Morales her life?

Whatever the case, with a local resident's discovery of Morales' severed arm (floating in nearby Hudson River), tales of the damned house surfaced once again. Strange disappearances, and stories of screams and unearthly wails heard emanating from the mansion have again become the subject of conversation. Meanwhile, both state and local police have refused to comment on their findings, and the reason for barricading off the Stauf residence.

In *Guest*, the player assumes the role of the seventh individual "invited" to enter Henry A. Stauf's ominous domicile: an entirely computer generated structure of surprising realism and detail. The game, presented in gothic horror garb, consists primarily of a collection of 23 logic puzzles woven together in the form of a graphic adventure that takes the player through the 22 rooms of Stauf's eerie mansion. As such, *Guest* will appeal more to those enamored of puzzles and the horror genre than to die-hard adventurers.

Having Its Profound Effects

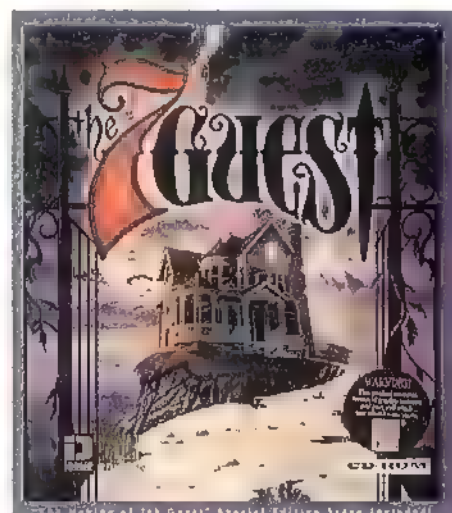
Yet, however you define it, *Guest* is still a visual and audio showpiece employing 256-color Super VGA graphics and an impressive 16-bit audio soundtrack, written and performed by master musician George Alistair (The Fat Man) Sanger. Graphics and audio — in fact, all elements of this game — combine to create an intense, gripping atmosphere.

Appropriately, *Guest* is best played with the volume cranked up and the lights dimmed, especially if one desires to get the full experi-

ence. This environment really lets *Guest* shine. Digitized "ghosts" can then go through their paces with the greatest clarity and detail; creaks and footfalls have their most chilling effect. The music, *Guest's* foremost element in my opinion, is ethereal, adding greatly to the atmosphere of the game.

Playing Games with Your Mind

As indicated, *Guest* is primarily a puzzle game, not a graphic or animated adventure.



TITLE:	The 7th Guest
PR. CL.	\$99.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386DX or better, 2MB RAM, 16 bit SVGA video card with 512K RAM, CD-ROM drive with 150K transfer rate, sound card with FM and PCM sound, mouse, hard drive with 10MB free space, MSDOS 2.2 or higher
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Graeme Devine and Rob Landeros
PUBLISHER:	Virgin Games, Inc. Irvine, CA (714) 833-1999





While there is an element of exploration involved as one moves about "experiencing" the house, its goal is primarily to seek out the next puzzle to solve and learn more of the game's plot.

Puzzles are mostly of the logic variety, and include rubic, spatial and word-based brain teasers. Chess boards are employed for three puzzles, necessitating the position or movement of chess pieces in the solution process. Several variants of the rubic cube are also employed, requiring the rotation of images or letters by row and column to arrive at the desired solution. Word mixers are used in a few of the puzzles as well, asking that the player unravel their hidden messages.

Though most of these conundrums are of average difficulty, some can be quite perplexing. Fortunately, help is available within the game. While attempting to solve a puzzle, one can visit the Library and examine Stauff's Book of Clues. On the first and second visits, clues are offered to assist the player in solving the puzzle in progress. On the third visit, the puzzle is automatically solved (without revealing the solution). When the game is complete, the player has full access to all of *Guest's* puzzles, so that he or she may return and try solving them again.

Dry Bones and Rotting Corpses

Guest is not without its share of "skeletons," however. To begin, it sets some very stringent hardware demands. Minimum requirements include a 386DX processor, 2MB of RAM, a 16 bit SVGA video card with at least 512K memory, a CD-ROM drive with a 150K transfer rate, a sound card with FM and PCM sound and a mouse. It should be remem-



bered, however, that these are MINIMUM requirements.

Systems meeting these minimums, though, may still experience difficulty in running *Guest*. For example, 386DX systems default to MCGA rather than SVGA unless a fast enough video card is detected, resulting in noticeable lower quality graphics (MCGA images are pitiful compared to their SVGA counterparts). Even if one's system has a "fast enough" video card to allow for SVGA graphics, it may be necessary to run in MCGA mode as some 386-based systems simply cannot decompress the data quickly enough for SVGA mode. A 486DX (33MHz or better), 4MB of RAM, a fast SVGA card, and a double-speed CD-ROM drive will make game play much more enjoyable (please see the sidebar, "Gaming on the ROM").

Too Early Too Late

With the beta version of *Guest* (previewed in Issue 105), I experienced some hardware compatibility problems. Of course, since the previous article was a "preview," such problems, appropriately, were not discussed in print. However, now that *Guest* is in final release, these issues must be addressed. It is in this regard that *Guest* may have arrived before



its time. Some gamers (probably most) will not be affected by hardware incompatibilities. Others, though, certainly will. The two main concerns revolve around problems with some PC clone motherboards and sound cards based upon the MediaVision chip set.

I have spoken with several gamers who have had absolutely no difficulties running *Guest*. However, indications are that many players are experiencing problems keeping, or getting, *Guest* running on their systems. Unfortunately, I am one of the latter.

The first problem, relating to incompatibilities with certain motherboard designs, has been fixed (with a patch available directly from Trilobyte and by download from the major on-line services). It seems that IBM-based motherboards call for a 16K write-through cache memory. However, not all clone makers employ this same standard. Some only allow for a 4K write-through. It is these boards that *Guest* has difficulties stomaching.



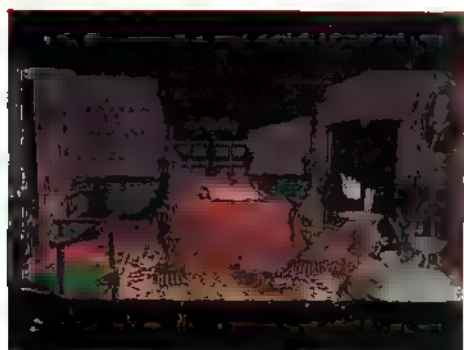
Problem number two, *Guest's* inability to work properly with some cards based on the MediaVision chip set employed in the Pro Audio Spectrum 16 (PAS16) sound board (and in OEM cards employing the same chip design), was the culprit responsible for my woes. Other players with sound cards based on the MediaVision chip set may also experience these difficulties.

In the case of both problems, the player may be greeted by audio drop-out and a quick exit to the system prompt. For those affected, the initial release of *Guest* is virtually unplayable. Fortunately, the above mentioned patch cures the incompatibility problem for those with "lesser" motherboards.

Should I PAS on *Guest*?

For those owning sound cards based on the Media Vision standard and experiencing DMA conflicts, there is still no final solution (as of May 28, 1993). The latest patch allows for continued play without exiting to DOS, but sound still drops out frequently. (Just prior to writing this review, Trilobyte suggested a "potential" hardware fix—disabling Sound Blaster compatibility and locking DMA transfers. However, it did not resolve the problem on my system.) This is a serious concern, as the only way to hear each digitized conversation in its entirety (which is necessary to follow the plot and gain audio clues to help in solving the puzzles) is to keep restoring and replaying these segments until they successfully play through. Unfortunately, this results in an obtrusive distraction to play. It also lessens one's enjoyment and the suspension of disbelief. Further, *Guest* repeatedly "locked" on certain puzzles during audio segments (most likely a result of the same hardware conflict). As it stands, many gamers will need





to acquire the patch file before being able to play the game. For a few, the game may be unplayable until the sound card issue is resolved. (Trilobyte is presently hard at work on a fix for the sound card conflicts).

Oh, This Ghostly Apparition!

Guest has both its pitfalls and pleasures. For those who manage to avoid compatibility issues, the visual and audible experience is striking and unique. The majority of puzzles offer sufficient challenge that makes completing them a satisfying experience, while serving to unravel the story further.

Still, there are some annoying aspects to play that should be dealt with in the upcoming sequel, *The 7th Guest, Part Two: The 11th Hour* — *Be Afraid of the Dark*. Hot keys for accessing game options (loading and saving)

and for providing the ability to bypass repetitive audio and/or video sequences are needed to speed game play. As an example, the same audio phrases are uttered with annoying repetition during puzzle segments and serve only to annoy and delay after initial exposure. I often wished for the ability to simply turn them off.

There also needs to be the ability to bypass the 3D "movement" in the game for slower systems. As it stands, the player is forced to endure the long video sequence of motion from one location to another, sometimes very slowly. While one of the selling features of the game, this 3D motion only makes the process a tedious one on slower systems. In addition, after witnessing the action several times, I would prefer the option of making the tran-



sition pass more quickly to alleviate the frustration that can develop while waiting for the game to transport the player to the next location.

A Welcome Guest?

Playing *Guest* in its final release leaves me with mixed emotions, primarily due to the compatibility problems encountered. Had it not been for these, I could easily give *Guest* a hearty thumbs up for those who relish gothic horror and enjoy immersing themselves in a good puzzle-based game. As it stands, though, I feel that I have been deprived of the full pleasure that *Guest* has to offer by the inability to get the game to run satisfactorily. After waiting so long for *Guest's* arrival, it has been disappointing to experience so much difficulty. It would have been better to further delay the game than to release it as was done, without sufficient testing.

In summary, *Guest* offers a rich, enjoyable gaming experience provided one has a fully compatible system. Otherwise, one can anticipate encountering a configuration nightmare. If all bodes well for one's system, however, the deviously clever puzzles, combined with *Guest's* superb graphics and audio, will provide a truly atmospheric experience. I only wish that my rendezvous with the ghosts of Stauff's Mansion hadn't been spoiled by these hardware specters. **CEW**

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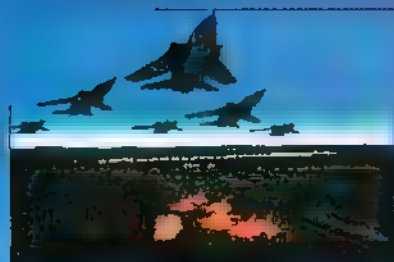
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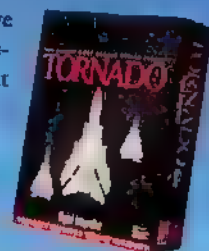
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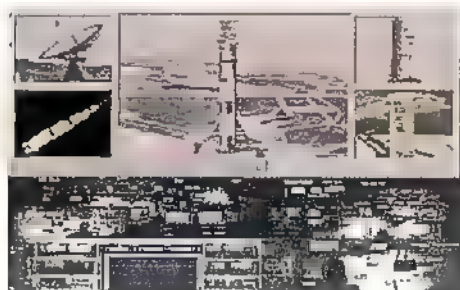




WHAT'S THE LAST FRONTIER?

Interplay's *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space*

Of all mankind's technological triumphs in the 20th Century, perhaps no achievement is more awe-inspiring than that of landing men on the moon. Although the technological breakthroughs necessary to accomplish that lofty goal were noteworthy in their own right, some would argue that the most interesting and important aspect of the space race was the political tension and competitive interplay between the United States and the Soviet Union. From the first sputtering launch of Sputnik to the landing of Apollo 11 on the Lunar surface, both of these countries were racing to assert their ideological supremacy through a display of technological prowess.



Today, Interplay and its developer, Strategic Visions, have sought to recreate those heady days of competitive spaceflight with the arrival of *Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space (BARIS)*. Based on the Task Force Games boardgame *LIFTOFF!* designed by Fritz Bronner, *BARIS* places players in charge of either the Soviet or American space program beginning in the year 1957. Although the player can direct the course of the space program, all roads eventually lead to the moon: the first player to send a team of astronauts safely to and retrieve them from the lunar surface wins the game.

POW! To The Moon!

After hard-drive installation, the dash to the lunar surface begins at the preference selection screen, where players can customize the game to their liking. Two human players can choose to square off against one another as the Soviets and the Americans, or a solitary player may choose to match wits with a computer-

controlled opponent. Up to nine difficulty settings are available, accessible by giving each side one of three different handicap settings. At the easiest setting, the player can run his space agency with absolute impunity; regardless of how many rockets explode on the launch pad, one cannot be relieved of duty. At higher difficulty levels, the political leadership of the country may decide to sack the player after one too many failed missions. Other preference settings include the option of using a historical game model (with Soviet equipment seen as inexpensive and unreliable, and American hardware viewed as pricey and dependable) along with a historical astronaut roster, replete with all the most famous astronauts — including, of course, Buzz Aldrin. For gamers with slower computing machinery (particularly 286 and slow 386SX machines), several options are available to toggle sound, music and animation on and off to increase the speed of gameplay.

Once game preferences have been set, *BARIS* begins by having newsmen Carter Walcrite (or a Soviet newswoman if the gamer decides to champion the Soviet cause) announce that the player has just been named director of the space program. After this brief news segment, the game proceeds to the main control screen, displayed as an overhead, isometric view of the space center of the player's country. The American player begins with an overhead shot of Cape Canaveral, while the Soviet player sees an overhead representation of Baikonour, the Soviet version of the Cape.

In the beginning of the game, only a few buildings are scattered across the screen, representing the limited initial options open to the player. The research and development complex is where new rocket systems, capsules, satellites and other space gear can be designed and produced. The vehicle integrator shed assembles the disparate components of a rocket launch (boosters, "kicker modules," capsules, et al), while mission control allows the player to set a launch timetable. The administration building serves as the nerve center of the player's space program. From this location, the player can check on the current budget, purchase hardware, plan

future missions, recruit astronauts, set game preferences, and save games.

As the game progresses, new buildings will appear (representing additions to the player's space program). Buildings for the training of astronauts will appear if the player begins research on a manned space capsule (such as the Mercury, Gemini or Apollo capsules for the U.S., and the Vostok, Voskhod, and Soyuz space crafts for the Soviets). In the space museum, aspiring astronauts can take a gander at space flight records, the current prestige rating of directors, the records of individual astronauts, and other information. Outside the complex, clicking on the image of the American capital brings up an evaluation of the player's situation by the vice-president, while a click on the Pentagon brings in secret information on the status of the competitor's space program. Selecting the



TITLE:	Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space
PRICE:	\$59.95
SYSTEMS:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286-12MHz, VGA/MCGA graphics, 1MB of hard-drive space
# of PLAYERS:	1 or 2
PROTECTION:	Documentation lock-up
DESIGNERS:	Fritz Bronner, Michael K. McCarty
PUBLISHER:	Interplay Irvine, CA (714) 553-6678

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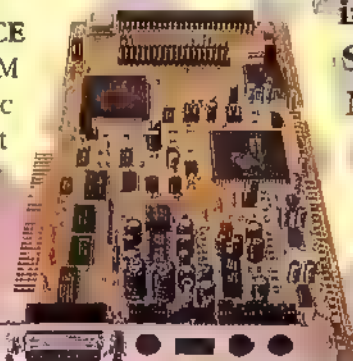
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**SOUND
GALAXY**



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full moon above the capital imparts to the gamer how much of the lunar surface has been reconnoitered and mapped by probes and telescopes. After the player has performed all of the actions deemed necessary for this turn, clicking on a flag located in the compound ends the player's turn and hands control over to his or her opponent. There are two turns each year: one Spring and Fall segment, each six-months long.

As director, the player's command options are unfettered by any unrealistic program limitations. Players can essentially choose their own missions and decide which space programs to develop. Instead of taking the Mercury-Gemini-Apollo route of manned spaceflight to the moon, players can pump all of their research funds into the Jupiter program, a massive four-person spacecraft that could land directly onto the moon without requiring the complex lander/command module docking procedures that the Apollo program did. Regardless of what programs the player chooses, getting to the moon is not an overnight process. Since the player is venturing into virgin territory, early missions will tend to be chancy at best. As the game continues the player amasses a wealth of scientific data about spaceflight, which results in more reliable launches and spacecraft operations. From the launch of the first unmanned orbital satellite to putting men on the moon, a well-structured program of extensive testing — including "dummy," or unmanned testing of manned spacecraft — is essential. If the player skips vital mission steps (such as not testing a lunar lander before it carries astronauts), the probability of failure will increase.

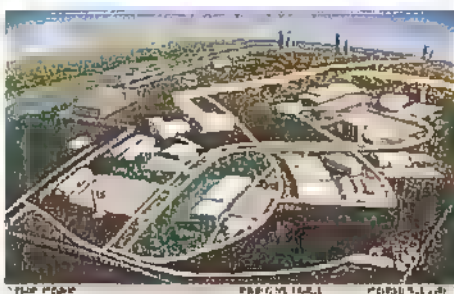
Multimedia Moon Launches

After researching, developing and testing space hardware, the actual launching of a space mission is where the player gets to see whether his efforts will result in brilliant success or abject failure. When everything is prepared for launch, the player ends the current turn of play. Then, after being given one last chance to abort the mission, the player is whisked off to the mission control screen. Composed of a large central monitor flanked by four smaller viewscreens, mission control is where players get to watch the mission and hold their breath. For launches, *BARIS* uses digitized animation of actual NASA and Soviet footage to illustrate the progress of the

mission. As the mission progresses, the viewscreens display appropriate bits of digitized footage, such as seeing an astronaut performing an actual space walk or the descent of a manned landing module towards the lunar surface. If the mission ends in disaster, the player will see actual footage of rockets exploding on the launch pad, looping back into the ground or otherwise failing to propel themselves into space. The speed of these tiny digitized animations is rather slow — even on my 486DX/2-66MHz these mini-movies run at just a few frames per second — but they add a great deal to the game.

Seeing astronauts finally walk on the lunar surface requires that players be able to manage disparate and often conflicting tasks. Keeping astronauts trained and satisfied while painstakingly testing and retesting new space equipment — particularly equipment designed to carry humans — can be quite a challenge. If a player achieves certain objectives before an opponent, that player is given a bonus in prestige, an increased budget and improved astronaut morale. Juggling the aggressive impulse to be the first at everything with the cautious patience demanded for manned space missions can be an arduous task at best. An unmanned test of a new capsule which goes awry simply costs money; a mission where the hardware fails and kills three astronauts exacts a much higher cost in money, morale and prestige. Sticking to small missions such as unmanned planetary flybys and probe landings may be safe, but won't generate the increase in funds and prestige that successful manned projects do. There is a fine line between victory and ignominious defeat in *BARIS*, and potential space directors would be wise to learn the dimensions of that boundary well.

To aid gamers in their quest to be the first to collect moon rocks, the game offers several forms of context-sensitive, on-line help. Pressing the F1 key brings up a help box that describes the current screen, F2 displays all relevant keyboard commands, and F3 presents a list of mission abbreviations. If gamers prefer the use of a mouse, clicking the right mouse button performs the same function as pressing the F1 key. For even more information, players can look to the documentation included with *BARIS*: a pithy 41-page rule book and a photo-filled 130+ page fact book. The former describes the operation of the game, while the latter serves as excellent back-



ground information on the space race between the Soviets and the Americans. Fascinating reading, the fact book chronicles the development of the American and Soviet programs, from the first feeble attempts at space (Sputnik and Explorer) to the projects that never were — such as the Soviet manned lunar expedition and the huge, 4-man Jupiter spacecraft mentioned earlier.

Moths In the Command Module

As polished as the documentation is, a few minor blemishes exist in the program itself. Hard drive installation can take a considerable amount of time on slower machines; users with slow '286 and '386 systems may have to wait through a 40-minute installation process. Once installed, however, the game runs surprisingly well.

During the computer's thinking phase, the game screen blacks out. Striking the enter key or space bar will make the screen eventually reappear. For the screen blackout bug and other minor bug fixes, Interplay has announced that an update is now available. Interested users can visit Interplay's forums on American Online, Compuserve and GEnie to download the fix. The Interplay BBS is another route, and users without modems can contact Interplay technical support directly.

SplashDown

BARIS is undoubtedly the best attempt yet at bringing the excitement of the Apollo lunar landings to the computer screen. Fritz Bronner is obviously well-versed in the history and procedures of space flight, and his interest evinces itself by the rigorous attention to detail exhibited in the game. The digitized NASA footage is one of the highlights of the program, although some gamers may wish to see more and longer clips. For this reason, *BARIS* cries out for a CD-ROM version. The immense storage capacity and crisp audio quality of compact disk would ensure that a much larger quantity and quality of digitized NASA footage could be incorporated into the game. CD-ROM wishes and program blemishes aside, *BARIS* is a game that should appeal to anyone with even a casual interest in space exploration. Players looking for a thoughtfully designed strategy game of the space race between the Soviets and the Americans should find *BARIS* a gaming experience not to be missed. **CSW**

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Actual IBM VGA Screen photo

Circle Reader Service #62

Where No Carmen Has Gone Before

Broderbund's *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?*

by Charles Arac

Just imagine the frequent flier miles she must collect. First, jetsetting around the world; then taking a cross-country tour of the United States; then visiting era after historical era via time machine; and now hopping from planet to planet across the solar system. When does this woman sleep?

Yes, Carmen Sandiego is back, together with a larcenous gang of extraterrestrials. This time, instead of stealing the pyramids of Egypt, they're after bigger game: the rings of Neptune, the elliptical orbit of Halley's Comet, and any other astronomical booty on which they can lay their sticky fingers, pincers, and/or pseudopods. All that stands between the thieves and the treasures of the night sky is the Intergalactic Division of the ACME Detective Agency. Three guesses who their best agent is.

Carmen Get It

Players familiar with previous episodes in the *Carmen Sandiego* saga will slide into the seat of their Cosmohopper 911 Turbo as though it were their favorite easy chair. Chasing Carmen around the solar system is, one quickly discovers, pretty much like chasing her anywhere else. The interface looks slightly more futuristic than before, and the tools are more space-oriented, but in all the important ways it's the same game.

For those who are unfamiliar with Broderbund's *idèle fixe*, a summary is in order. To begin with, catching Carmen's gang, and not Carmen herself, is the first order of business. There are 14 of these unsavory characters (they look like refugees from the Mos Eisley cantina), each with a set of characteristics that makes him, her or it unique. For instance, each criminous creature has a favorite astronomer and science fiction author; each has a certain diet and mode of locomotion; and each has certain physical characteristics such as hair, wings, scales or eyes.

As one pursues a fleeing perpetrator, one gets snippets of information from witnesses and informants which one uses to narrow the field of suspects. When the field is narrowed to a single suspect (which sometimes requires only one clue, sometimes three or four), the

player receives a warrant for that criminal's arrest.

The rest of the game involves tracking the criminal from planet to planet and moon to moon, following a trail of cryptic clues left behind in radio transmissions and conversations overheard by witnesses. These clues contain bits of information not about the criminal but about the location toward which the criminal was last seen headed. After about four correct hops from place to place, and assuming that the player has a warrant made out in the correct name, one catches up with the criminal and puts him, her or it in the slammer. Then, it's back to the Chief (an insectoid alien who speaks in digitized chirps) for one's next assignment.

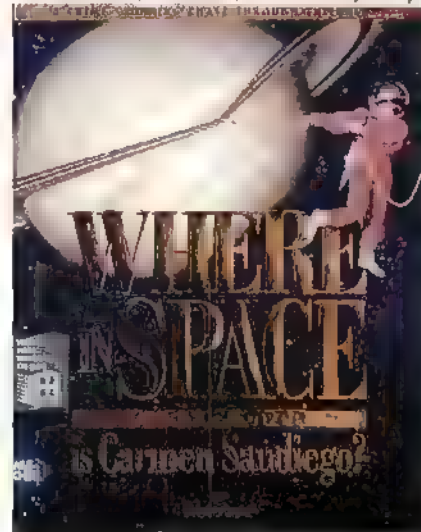
After every few successful cases, the player is raised a level, which means a new job title and more difficult clues. Early in the game, many of the location clues actually contain, in either anagram or pun form, the name of the location to which one must travel. So a clue that contains the words "RAMS ARMS" leads one to Mars, "PEN TUNE" directs the player to Neptune, and "He said he wanted to visit someone named Karen" sends one speeding off to Pluto's moon, Charon. As one gains experience, the clues become increasingly obscure, first referring to the mythological and literary characters after which many planetary features have been named, and eventually referring to topological features such as circumference, the names of craters, and distances between two celestial objects.

Another example of the increasing difficulty levels can be seen in the star map sequences. In order to track down some of the "radio signals," one has to locate constellations on a detailed star map. Initially, one is given both latitude and longitude for the desired constellation; after a few levels, the game drops one of these pieces of information; and, ultimately, the game supplies only the name ("Incoming transmission from Capricornus!") and leaves the player to find the constellation on his or her own.

The idea, of course, is that as the player progresses in the game he or she should become increasingly familiar with the planets

and stars, so that the task of locating a constellation on a star map or identifying one of Jupiter's moons from a piece of trivia about it becomes second nature. To help in the familiarization process, each location one visits appears on the screen (usually as a digitized photograph) along with a paragraph or two of text about it. The game also contains an illustrated on-line database of astronomical facts and comes packed with the *Peterson First Guide To Astronomy* as an off-line primer.

Thus, even someone who goes into the experience a complete novice will emerge from playing this game an expert of sorts. One will know, for instance, that "Halley's comet is...shaped like a lumpy potato." One will know that Voltaire and Jonathan Swift have been immortalized as features on the moons of Mars because of fiction they wrote in which the moons of Mars appeared. One will know that Arthur C. Clarke wrote *2001, A Space*



TITLE:	Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?
PRICE:	\$79.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16MHz, VGA, 8 MB HD space
PROTECTION:	Nunu
DESIGNERS:	Bob Arent, John Baker, Michael Barrett, Christa Beeson, Michelle Bushnell, Jim Everson, Ken Goldstein, Lance Croody, Tom Rittig, David Ross
PUBLISHER:	Broderbund Novato, CA (415) 382-4400

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Odyssey and that the constellation Cassiopeia is supposed to resemble a seated woman. (Anyone who looks up at a bunch of stars and thinks they look like a woman has been away from real women too long, methinks.) One will also know that Mercury's surface temperature reaches 800 degrees Fahrenheit, that the Viking spacecraft traveled to Mars in 1976, and that the Moon's orbit is tilted five degrees with respect to the Earth's.

Of what use all this information is, I am not certain. We live in an information-worshipping culture; our cups runneth over with data, data and more data. It matters not a jot in my life whether the Moon's orbit is tilted five, rather than four or six, degrees; and all other things being equal, I'd rather not know. My head is already too cluttered with things I don't need.

The earlier *Carmen Sandiego* games taught players things that are clearly of some value: where countries are located on their planet and who lives there, what happened in their past and when. Even in those games the emphasis on memorization of trivia was somewhat annoying, but at least the trivia had some claim to relevance. With *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?*, the connection is more tenuous.

Still, for those whose heads are less cluttered than mine, or who are more patient than I am, or who have an appetite for astronomy that can be sated by nothing less than knowing the surface temperature on Mercury, *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?* delivers the goods. The game's intended audience of curious kids — like my brother who, at age five, memorized the names of all the bones in the human body — will probably eat it up.

One Small Step for Carmen

Those of us who are less curious (or less hungry) may still be wowed, at least for a while, by the package's bells and whistles. In addition to the digitized pictures mentioned above (mainly cribbed from NASA photo and animation archives), the game provides an original soundtrack which, though it won't sell any records, won't sell any earplugs, either; a variety of ambient sound effects to accompany blastoffs, landings, and the like; an on-board computer that speaks to the player in English and a bevy of aliens who speak their own weird languages; and loads of animation.

It is the animation that steals the show, of course, as should be the case. After all, it's the reward one gets for doing anything right. Find a constellation on the star map and that constellation rotates into view and comes to life. Pursue a bad guy successfully to his next stopping point and a mini-cartoon is shown in which an enemy agent gets his slapsticky comeuppance.

These cartoons are great fun, parodying everything from *The Three Stooges* through 2001 to vintage arcade games. There are also gags that don't parody anything in particular but which are clever enough to win a smile from the sourest curmudgeon: an amoeba spies the player's ship and, in terror, splits in two; a gum-chewing spacewoman blows a bubble inside her helmet and loses control of her scooter when the bubble bursts; a one-ton weight released above the player's ship drifts harmlessly away due to the absence of gravity.

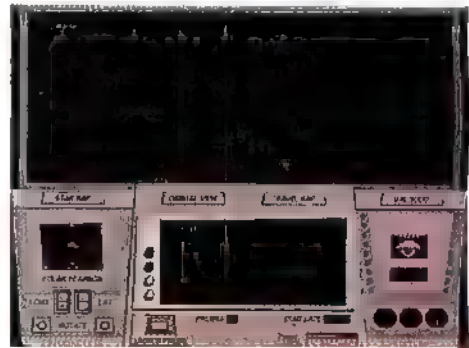
There is only one problem with the cartoons — as many of them as there are (I counted 16), there aren't enough. The game has several levels, each containing several missions, and each mission requiring several cartoons. Yet, the game keeps doling out the same animations, apparently selected at random from a fairly small pool. After a handful of missions, one has seen them all several times.

The surprising and wonderful thing is that they actually do stand up to repeat viewing. The gags are so quick and funny that seeing them just once doesn't satisfy. However, there is a limit to how many times anyone wants to see the same gag repeated. For some people it will be twice, for some ten times, but at some point every player will yawn and say, "Oh, that one again" and terminate the animation with a click of the mouse button.

The same can be said for the animations that illustrate the alien informants and constellations. There are only three informants in the game, each of whom has only one animation, so their gags wear thin that much faster. They also speak in dissonant burps and caws which are quite grating to hear. The constellations have even briefer and simpler animations, and again just one apiece. Once one has seen Hercules wave his club, one has seen everything Hercules is going to do. (Some, such as the animation for Crux, the cross, are even simpler.) After a half dozen missions, the

player is likely to click his way past these animations as well.

Then there are the Chief's ear-grinding chirps and the not-especially-soothing engine thrum that accompanies space travel, both of which one will probably want to escape after the first few repetitions. Even such nice fillips as the way a planer drifts gently onto the screen when one arrives seem unnecessarily time-consuming after one has visited each location several times.



Fortunately, the game allows the player to cut these sequences short, too. One wonders, though, what one is playing the game for if one is aborting the animations, clicking past the travel sequences, and silencing all the characters who can talk. Is it that the puzzles are so much fun? Not really. They are fine, but after a while even these become repetitive because the same clues get used over and over.

None of this reflects on the game's quality, which is quite high, but rather on its longevity, which is low. Younger gamers may come back to it on more occasions than older ones, but even kids will notice eventually that they have run out of new things to do and see. This will happen, I predict, long before they "win" the game by catching all the criminals.

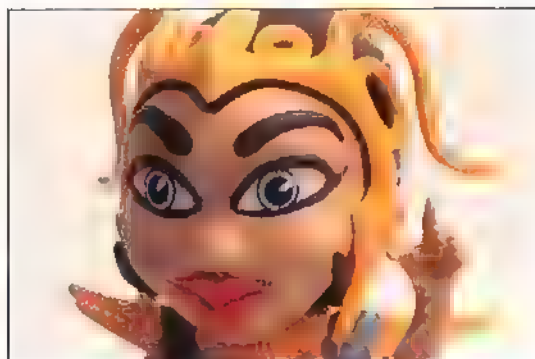
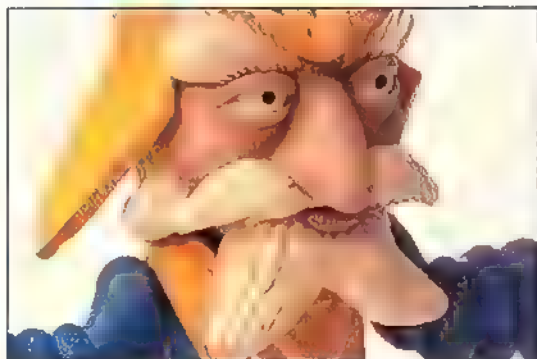
So, while *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?* is a worthy addition to the line in the sense that it is both educational and entertaining, it gives the impression of being somehow less impressive and less satisfying than its predecessors. Maybe it's that, while every country looks and sounds unique, one moon looks very much like every other. (The earlier games all feel bigger than this one does, which is ridiculous when one compares the amount of territory covered in each.) Maybe it's that astronomy has a narrower appeal than either terrestrial geography or history. Or maybe it's just that the fourth time one plays what is essentially the same game, new pictures and a new subject aren't enough to make it feel new.

Whatever the reason, Carmen seems to be feeling the effects of middle age. *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?* is a slick, professional piece of work which will make some players very happy, but it seems to lack the staying power of the earlier games. *Where in Space is Carmen Sandiego?* is perfectly good. It simply isn't stellar. **C6W**



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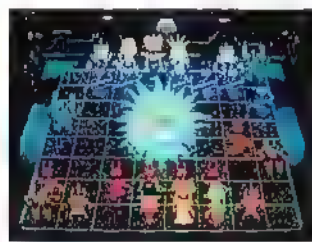
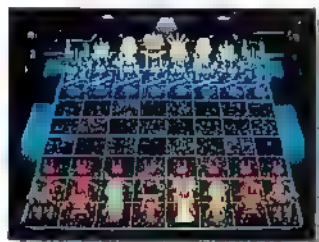
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Scorpion's View

Eye of the Beholder III: Hit or Myth-Demeanor?



TITLE Eye of the Beholder III: Assault on Myth Drannor
PRICE \$69.95
SYSTEM IBM
REQUIREMENTS 386, 20 MB+ VGA graphics, 1 MB RAM for sound, 9.5 MB+ hard drive space
PROTECTION Disk, installation look up
DESIGNERS Peter Belinfante, David A. Lucca, John Miles
PUBLISHER Strategic Simulations, Inc., Sunnyvale, CA
(408) 717-6800

Ten years ago, in the fated July-August 1983 edition of *Computer Gaming World*, the mysterious Scorpia invaded the pages of our august (not to be confused with August, necessarily) publication for the first time. Since the current issue of *CGW* will bear the cover date of August and will actually hit newstands in July, it seems like a tremendous opportunity to offer a tribute to one of the most famous voices in the world of computer role-playing and adventure. To Scorpia: May you keep your mind and pen sharp, while you continue to savage on-screen Foozles and game design foibles. Long live the queen of computer gaming, not just Scorpia the First, but Scorpia the Only.

Assault on Myth Drannor is the third and concluding chapter of the *Eye of The Beholder* (EOB) series. As with the previous games, it is a pretty straightforward hack-and-puzzle romp with the usual "Kill the Foozle" finale. In this case, the party is set down in the middle of a graveyard. From there, the characters make their way through a forest to the ruins of Myth Drannor to confront the various evil beings that now infest what's left of the city. As you might expect, there are quite a lot of them running around.

While the city is fairly large and has some goodies tucked away here and there, most of the game will be spent going through the Mages Guild and the Temple of Lathandar, which is the game's conclusion. Don't be misled by that, however; while there are not many different locations, none of them can be described as "small." The Guild, for instance, is deceptive. It goes on for much longer than it first appears, complete with a number of underground water passages.

This also means you'll want plenty of graph paper handy, as there is no auto-mapping in the game. Since these areas are big, you can't really skip the mapping unless you happen to have a photographic memory. Fortunately, once the local inhabitants have been dispatched, you can explore in peace; in most places, they don't regenerate.

Characters can be brought over from *EOB II*, created new for this game, or you can go with the Quickstart party provided in the first save slot. New characters, and those in the Quickstart group, come in at levels 9-11, and have mainly +1 equipment. Actual starting level depends on whether a character is single or multi-classed. My Dwarven fighter started at 11th level, while the Half-Elf Fighter/Magic-User began at 9/10, respectively.

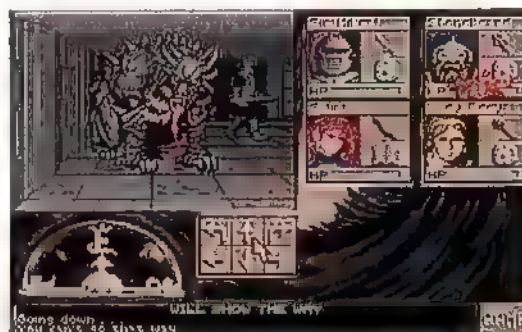
If you bring over your old party from *EOB II*, they will keep most of their goodies, including high-level armor and weapons. Some items that were specific to the previous game, such as stone portal keys, will not make the transition. Since you don't need them anyway, they are no big loss.

One thing to watch out for is the way the party will be brought over. You don't get a choice of characters; the transfer utility simply picks the first four characters from the indicated save game and brings them in. This could be a problem, as you may end up with characters you don't want, or lose items you want to bring over that happen to be with someone in the back ranks.

Fortunately, you do get a choice of save games from which to extract the characters. If one save doesn't have what you want, try another. If none are satisfactory, you may want to consider reinstalling *EOB II* and arranging the characters and items as you desire.

My own recommendation is to bring your party over from *Legend of Darkmoon* if you can; failing that, create a new one. Transferred characters, particularly with those potent +3 to +5 weapons, will have a much easier time of it, especially at the beginning.

Combat is much the same as before, but a couple of long-awaited improvements have been made. The first is the All-Attack mode. This nifty feature allows for simultaneous strikes by as many members of the party as you wish, provided they have the proper weapons. For



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(Computer Game Review, Oct. 1992)

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instance, the front rank is using swords and the back rank is using bows. When "All-Attack" is hit, everyone strikes at once.

This does not, however, apply to spells or magic items. To cast a spell, or use a wand, you still have to click on the spellbook, holy symbol, wand in hand, or whatever. For all that, with the new attack mode, it is now possible to have everyone in the party do something constructive (or destructive, depending on your viewpoint) in the same round. Generally, because there is still that "hesitation" when a spell goes off, it is best to do a physical attack followed by a magical one.

The other improvement is the ability to use polearms from the second rank. This one is more of interest to parties coming in with such a weapon already (like the +5 halberd from *EOB II*), since it wasn't until fairly late in the game that I came across a halberd in Myth Drannor. The staff is not considered a polearm, and can only be used from the front rank.

These two changes do make fighting a little easier. If you have (or once you have) powerful weapons, that is +3 or better, it is only the most hardy opponent that will last beyond a single round of combat. Of course, when faced with multiple critters at the same time, your party will have to engage in the famous "dance of death," hitting and moving away, with one hand on the mouse and the other on the arrow keys.

Save slots have been expanded and allow for a total of 12 positions. The Quickstart party is pre-saved in slot 1; if you aren't going to be using this group, you can use the slot for saving your own party.

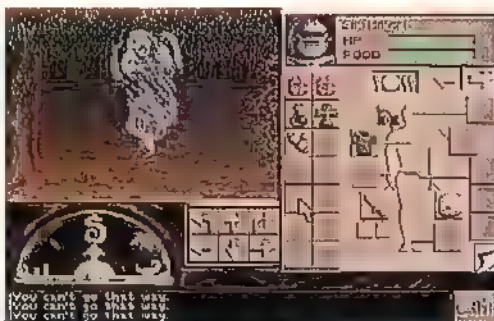
Puzzles are similar to those in previous games, involving buttons, levers, pressure plates, special items, and quite a few false walls. The True Seeing spell is therefore important, especially in the Mages Guild; unless you enjoy walking into walls to see if they're real or not, this is one spell you should have active as often as possible.

New critters to fight abound, including Ogre Slugs, Undead Beasts, Nagas, Watch Ghosts, Slithermorphs, Death Knights, Feyrs, and Living Muck, among others. The Mucks are actually one of the nastier monster types, as any weapon (even magical) striking a Living Muck has an excellent chance of dissolving away. These creatures are best dispatched with Hold Monster followed by a small barrage of cold-based spells (Cone of Cold is very good here).

Spells for mages go up to 9th level of power, but it is unlikely that anyone in your party will be casting these from memory. A 9th level spell requires an 18th level mage which, in turn, requires three million experience points. That adds up to a lot more combat than most people care to indulge in, so save the higher-level spell scrolls for in-hand use rather than adding them right away to a spellbook.

Since Myth Drannor is the closeout of the *EOB* series, one would expect it to be on the spectacular aside. Unfortunately, for several reasons, that isn't the case.

Graphically, the game is not on a par with the previous two. Wherever you are — the forest, the city, the guild, the temple — the area is dark and murky. While it could be considered an indication of evil influence, after a time this dreary sameness becomes boring. Worse yet, this darkness affects the character display. The inventory screen is fine, but the informational



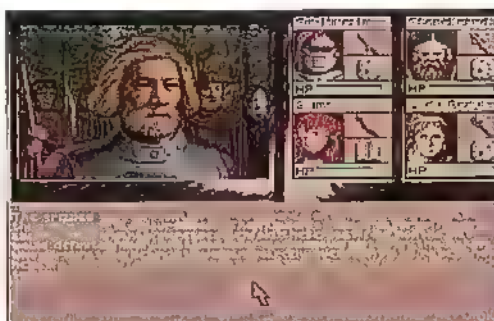
screen, which displays level, class, stats, experience, etc., cannot be read at all, except for the numbers themselves.

Interiors show a depressing lack of variety, and many seem to have been lifted wholesale from the evil temple of *EOB II*, with little done to change them or dress them up. The closest to novelty are the air bubbles that drift by in the underwater passages and the sun doors in the Temple of Lathandar.

Aurally, the game is a nightmare. Monsters announce their presence long before they are visible, with enough noise to wake the dead three countries over. The tension produced in the first two games by the subtle use of sound effects is completely destroyed here by thunderous clanks, rumbles, slitherings and similar noises. At times, I turned the sound off simply because it was too much to endure.

The puzzles and obstacles are, for the most part, standard *EOB* fare, but there are a couple of rather nasty situations. One occurs in the water tunnels, where a particular section is full of anti-magic zones, several of them unavoidable. Walking into a zone cancels all spells, and naturally the party begins drowning from lack of air. The influence of these zones extends beyond the actual spot stepped on, such that spells fizzle when they are attempted.

So, the characters are now running around an unfamiliar area, slowly dying, fighting off monsters, and casting spells every couple of steps, trying to find a place where magic will work before everyone dies off.

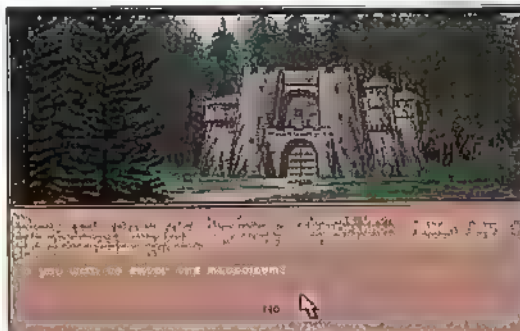


There is one Helm of Water Breathing down here; I used it to keep a Fighter/Magic User alive to map out the section and cast spells to find the limits of the anti-magic zones. Then, I restored the game and raced the party through to the spot where magic worked again, and that way I managed to keep everyone alive.

There is another frustrating situation in the water passages. At one point, an outlet sweeps the party into a dead end, which appears to have no exit. In fact, there *is* a way out. Unfortunately, the button that opens the exit is indistinguishable from the rest of the wall. You have to click blindly all over the face to find it. Naturally, you don't know which wall is the right one, so you have to try all of them, hoping that you don't miss the button, which is an easy thing to do.

The big fight at the end is a letdown. While "Foozle" has a couple of Death Knights and Shadow Hounds with him, these are easily removed from the scene (especially if you have a Time Stop spell), leaving the party to concentrate on the big boy alone. Supposedly a god in mortal form, he gave us far less trouble than Dran Draggore in *The Legend of Darkmoon*.

Which is not to say he just rolls over and dies; he can easily trash the group if you're not careful. Still, it didn't take much waltzing around the room to polish him off (with no character in my party higher than 11th level). As a grand finale, this left a little something to be desired.



Overall then, *Assault on Myth Drannor* is a disappointment. While a few much-needed improvements have been made, they aren't enough to balance out the rest of the game. Deficient in graphics and sound effects, monotonous in parts (especially the forest), and with a major confrontation that is more fizzle than sizzle, *EOB III* just doesn't stack up against the previous two games. What started as a series with great promise has, alas, ended on a mediocre note. **CSW**

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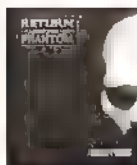
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Promises, Promises

Spectrum HoloByte's *Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1*

by Jay Kee

The header on the back of the box reads: "Great minds invented chess. Warped minds invented *Chess Maniac*." No argument here. *National Lampoon's Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1*, Spectrum HoloByte's entry in the "chess for laughs" category, is definitely warped. And that's about the best thing that can be said for it. It's the sort of thing that might have evolved from a particularly silly Spectrum HoloByte office party — the sort of joke that isn't quite so funny when one has sobered up.

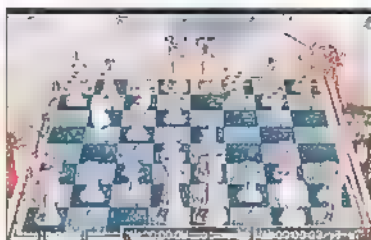
The slick packaging promises much in the way of great laughs and great chess, but the program delivers neither. In fact, the best feature of *Chess Maniac* is the manual. It could easily stand alone as a comedy magazine with its hilarious spoofs of chess and chess terminology. The glossary alone is almost worth the price of admission. *Almost*. If only the program matched that standard....

Chess Maniac promises "male and female models filmed and digitized for full motion video skits." What one gets are animated characters that actually move like real people. A nice touch, considering the work it required and the huge amount of disk space needed for the video files. (The game takes close to an hour to install and nearly 27 MBs of hard drive space.) Unfortunately, the supporting graphics — the things one needs to actually play a game of chess — don't cut it, and with sub-standard graphics for the game itself, the animation is a waste of effort.

What You See and What You Get

Chess Maniac promises "extravagant 256-color VGA graphics." The images on the back of the package certainly look promising. Yet, what one sees on the screen is something else again. The characters are fuzzy and indistinct, the background is dark, and the view point of the board makes it nearly impossible to distinguish one piece from another. Both board sets, the "Boring" and "Bawdy," suffer from this lack of clarity and poor perspective.

Fortunately, the program includes a "Small Board" option that allows one to call up an overhead view of the board in standard format; without it, one wouldn't be able to find the piece one wanted with the mouse, much less play a game. Unfortunately, you can't size it to fit on the screen without covering most of the main board. Not that it matters. The program will zoom in on the animations and drop the small board into the background so all one misses are things like a small dog that constantly runs out and pees on the board, a toy doll that pirouettes across the screen, and the "amply chested chess



goddess" that appears occasionally across the board. But players shouldn't worry — they aren't missing much.

Chess Maniac promises "60 outlandish ways for one piece to take another." Depending on one's definition of outlandish, the program delivers. Or not. There is a disturbing theme of violence underlying the slapstick comedy. Graphic, bloody scenes of female characters being stabbed and slashed to death are not, by any definition, funny. Nor are

scenes of male characters being shredded by automatic weapons. Of course, not every take-out is violent. Some are tired, predictable pie in the face slacks; others are merely inane; few have any redeeming comedic value whatsoever. One has to wonder, watching these scenes unfold, how anyone could have thought them funny.

Chess Maniac promises "disgusting digitized sounds," and it delivers. The sounds are disgusting, but not the way they were intended to be. Detracting from the various burps, farts and sneezes that punctuate the game are clearly audible loops and splices in the playback. In fairness, my AdLib board doesn't match something like Sound Blaster Pro for reproducing sound effects, but playing effects through the PC speaker usually clears up the glitches. Unfortunately, when I attempted to reconfigure the program to replay sound through the PC speaker, I discovered that it couldn't be done. There is no warning of this on the box, and although it does state that specific sound cards are needed to reproduce sound and music, it does not say that the PC speaker option found in so many programs is unavailable.

Chess Anyone?

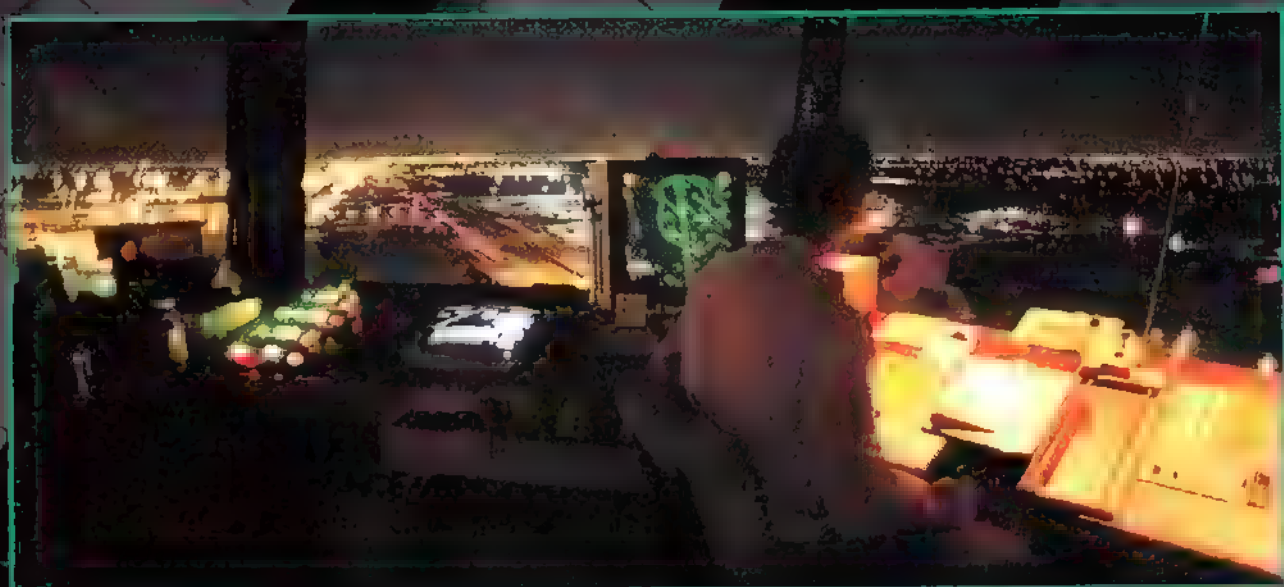
Chess Maniac promises "ten levels of real chess from beginner to advanced." What one gets is a very rudimentary chess program that, by today's standards, is anything but sophisticated. It offers the basics — replay, take-back move, print, switch sides, and force move — but not much else.

At its highest level, the program is painfully slow (averaging around three minutes per move) and not very capable. At its lowest level, it's much faster and much weaker. If this were a human opponent, one might feel sorry for it. At the beginner level, words like laughable and hilarious come to mind, but it's not clear if the comedy was intentional.

There is a time control option that allows the player to optimize the level and duration of play to a certain extent, but there is no evidence or documentation of the use of hash tables or "think during move" algorithms (where the program searches for its next move during the player's turn) employed by more sophisticated games. The program consistently takes a long



TITLE	Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1
PRICE	\$69.95
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS	386-2+MHz, 1MB RAM, VGA graphics, 77MBs hard drive space, DOS 5.0
PROTECTION	Document it on Look up
DESIGNERS	Paul Mogg, Eric Lipp
PUBLISHER	Spectrum HoloByte Alhambra, CA (510) 521-1164



ETA Autumn 1993

Mallard.

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time to make its moves at the highest levels, even in obvious exchange situations, and it is consistently slow during the endgame—two areas that usually benefit the most from “think-during-move” and hash table algorithms.

There is a “Learning” mode, but the term is misleading. It does *not* mean that the program is capable of learning from the player by storing and recalling exceptional moves; it simply shows all available moves for a selected piece. This is not a “hint” option either, by the way; the program offers no such option.

The opening library is anyone’s guess. There is no documentation to support it, but it appears to be somewhat limited in scope and depth. Even that limitation wouldn’t be so bad if there were a hint option that would permit a player to study and practice the opening game.

Not All Bad

Not everything about *Chess Maniac* is bad. There are a couple of things that stand out as unique among chess games. The first is the “Cheat” option; the second is the commentary. One of them is actually funny.

The Cheat option, when turned on, turns the program into a thief. In one scene reminiscent of Monty Python, it will attempt to steal one of your pieces, slowly lifting it off the board while playing an innocent tune. Once one learns how to ESCape this problem, a ruler material-



izes and smacks the computer-generated hand, forcing it to replace the piece in its original position. In another scene, a shark fin materializes and circles around the board. After a few laps, Son of Jaws rises up and swallows one of the player’s pieces. While this is funny at first, it quickly wears thin and becomes an irritation. Of course, given the program’s overall level of play, cheating is probably the only way it can win against even a moderately experienced opponent.

The spoken commentary deserves mention because it is one of the few things about this game that could actually be described as funny. Using digital voice samples, the program produces a very good imitation of the HAL 9000 computer from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The remarks are nicely scattered, unpredictable and quite funny. It’s worth playing a very bad game just once to experience the full range of witticisms this computer-generated personality can deliver. The only irritation here is that the pseudo-HAL insists on calling the player Dan, perhaps out of legal necessity.

Beach Front Property

Sadly, *Chess Maniac* is, in my opinion, an example of marketing strategy taking precedence over product quality. A lot of effort went into producing rotoscoped animation sequences and expensive packaging, but not enough effort went into producing crisp graphics, clean sound, state-of-the-art chess algorithms, or decent satire.

Chess Maniac 5 Billion and 1 promises the world and delivers a small plot of swampland somewhere in the Florida Everglades. If one still giggles uncontrollably at underarm farts, or titters wildly over “toilet talk,” there is more than a 5th grade-classroom full of such naughtiness here. Otherwise, one would be better off playing *ChessMaster 3000* and renting a copy of *Animal House*. **CGW**

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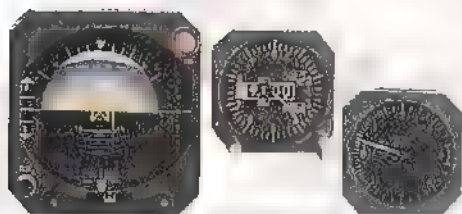
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A Different Approach

Flight Deck Software's Instrument Flight Trainer — Professional



by Timothy L. Trimble

You've been in the clouds for almost 20 minutes, descending at 700 feet per minute. The CDI (Course Deviation Indicator) shows that you keep drifting off to the right, so you compensate by "crabbing" into the wind. Finally, at 1300 feet you break out of the clouds and see the runway right in front of you. Pausing the program, you take another look at the approach chart, and then back at the computer screen.

"That's cheating," your instructor exclaims. "Just for that, I'm going to take away an instrument." Your instructor moves a pointer to the top left corner of the airspeed indicator, clicks the mouse, and watches as the instrument disappears. "There! Now continue."

Does this sound like a \$50 an hour simulator? Well, guess again. It is Flight Deck Software's *Instrument Flight Trainer-Professional (IFT-Pro)* for IBM compatibles. *IFT-Pro* is for the serious armchair pilot, student pilot, or professional pilot wanting to brush up on his or her instrument skills. While some may think that *IFT-Pro* is just another flight simulation package similar to *Microsoft Flight Simulator* or *Sublogic's ATP*, it is actually a "serious" simulator specializing in instrument flight, known in the aviation world as Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight.

Watch the Gages!

What sets *IFT-Pro* apart from other simulators is the precision and realism of the instruments. Depending on the type of aircraft being simulated (Cessna 172, Cessna 172RG, Cessna 152, Beech Bonanza A36 or a Piper Malibu) different types of instruments will be displayed. For example, the Cessna 152 will have a different set of OBI instruments (for VOR navigation) than the higher performance Piper Malibu. However, for example, the HSI (Horizontal Situation Indicator) could be used instead of the standard Gyro Compass for a Cessna 152 flight, selected easily by clicking the mouse on the instrument. The frequency of the radio can be changed by placing the mouse cursor over the frequency display

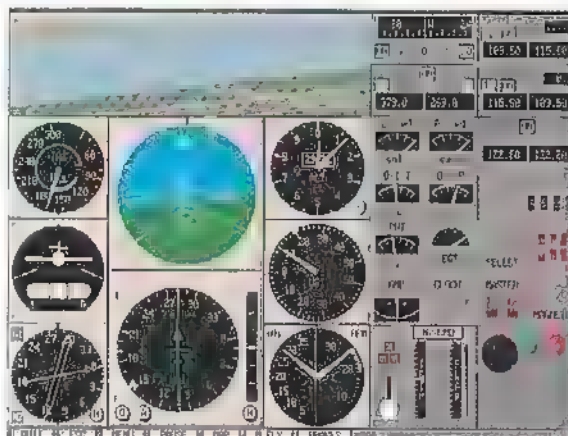
and then pressing the left or right button to increase or decrease the frequency. The throttle is adjusted by "grabbing" the knob with the cursor and moving the mouse. This flexibility and control of the instruments allows a novice instrument pilot to be gradually introduced to the more complex instruments as skills increase. Further, the crisp clear display of the instruments on a VGA display make the program a real pleasure to use, and the descriptions of the instruments in the manual helps to eliminate some of their mystery.

Many of the small details of aircraft operation are simulated in *IFT-Pro*. For instance, it is possible to get a dead battery by forgetting to turn off the master switch. Check lists are provided for many of the standard operating procedures of the various aircraft, such as startup, cruise, takeoff, landing, and emergency situations. The oil can be checked and filled, and individual fuel

tanks can be loaded to various levels. A flight plan can also be prepared with various legs and waypoints, and then, transferred and viewed on the map.

Where Are We?

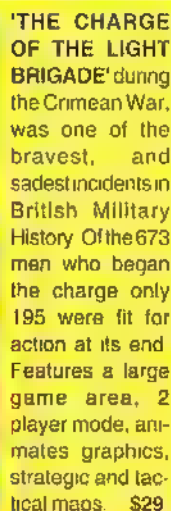
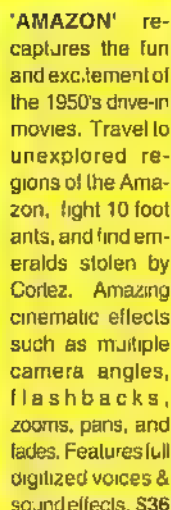
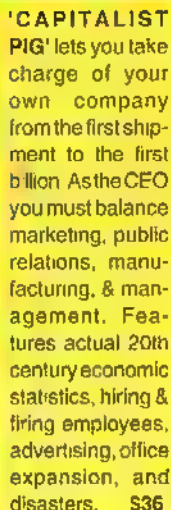
The on-line map is a great visual aid, useful for both navigating from one point to another and evaluating the flight after the trip is complete. Both the flight plan and the actual course of flight can be displayed on the map, and various levels of zoom are available for viewing a single airport or half the State of California. A line can be drawn on the map for measuring distance, and the radials of the two currently selected VORs can be used to identify intersections and mark flight courses. A lot of additional information can be displayed on the map, such as the field elevation and magnetic variation of the airports, the frequency and type of ILS, the radial and distance from the host VOR, and much more. Basically, the on-line map is a great simulation of the ILS sectional map which usually sits in the lap of the pilot.



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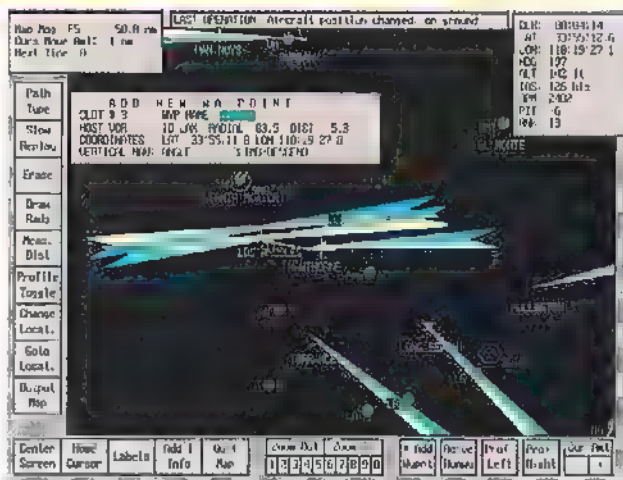
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So Enough with the Details! How Does It Fly?

Flying with *IFT-Pro* is a real pleasure but it does take a little getting used to. The controls are very sensitive, but the instruments provide immediate feedback. Even someone that is an expert with *Microsoft Flight Simulator* will spend a few extra minutes getting accustomed to the sensitivities of *IFT-Pro*, but it is well worth the time.

Using the *Virtual Pilot* flying yoke from CH Products and the *Rudder Control System* (RCS) from Thrustmaster, I configured and flew a Piper Malibu from Carlsbad to Van Nuys, California, using all of the advanced instruments. With the on-line map and the FAA approach charts (provided free with *IFT-Pro*), I was able to fly strictly by the instruments to Catalina Island, to the Fillmore VOR, and then "shoot" an instrument approach into Van Nuys airport. When I broke out of the clouds at 1000 feet the runway was right in front of me. Throwing in a little weather and turbulence, however, can turn this little pleasure trip into a white knuckle experience.

"Out the window" views are sparse (airport runways only) but then, this is an instrument trainer. The documentation expects the reader to be familiar with flying to some extent, and I couldn't find a single screen shot. If the roughly 120 pages of text were doubled with additional detail and screen shots then it would be a lot easier to justify the \$350 price tag for the package. However, aside from the rather inadequate manual, *IFT-Pro* is a high quality, serious simulator which



goes a long way towards educating and assisting pilots with their instrument skills.

Although the time utilized on *IFT-Pro* cannot be logged as FAA approved flight time, the price of the software and a good set of flight controls will easily provide the same type of training one would get in a \$30 to \$50 per hour flight simulator. *IFT-Pro* is not designed for the casual gamer with a slight interest in flight simulators, and such a person would quickly become discouraged with the complexity of instrument flight. However, the serious flight simulator fanatic who needs the next challenge beyond *Microsoft Flight Simulator* will be delightfully pleased.

Once again this is your daring aviator, "The Terminator," with his head in the clouds (a monitor) and his seat in the cockpit (a kitchen chair), saying, "So long till next time!"

IFT-Pro is available from:

Flight Deck Software
P.O. Box 425
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187
1-800-955-4359

Other Products Mentioned:

Flight Simulator by Microsoft Inc.
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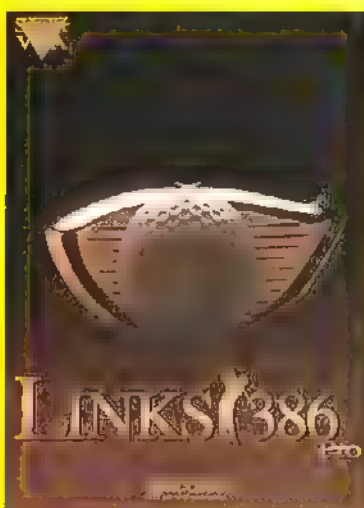
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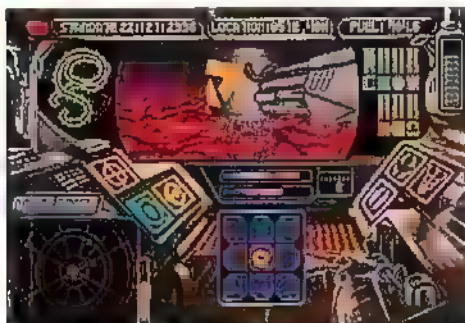
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Spanning The Galaxy

Released for IBM PC and Macintosh

After pulling back a stiff sip of your drink, you turn to the companion sharing your table. He leans over towards you, and you try not to look into his eyes, focusing instead on the insectoid band hammering away on their catherine-wheel of an instrument. Your friend is human, or at least was, once. Now he is a walking encyclopedia of the hazards of Thule sector. Still, you listen to what he has to say.

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The Ship And I

Protostar: War on the Frontier is Tsunami Media's latest release. *Protostar* is a science fiction epic combining role-playing and action components into a richly detailed quest

on the fringes of a frontier war. The game is played through a first-person perspective, and as an agent of the Protostar directive, the player must gather information, employ diplomacy or expert combat tactics, and must be a successful merchant, not only to outfit the starship but also to channel funds to the human defense forces.

The general framework of *Protostar* is very similar to the *Starflight* and *Star Control* series of games. A player starts out with a bare-bones starship, a planetary explorer, and a small tidbit of information. From there, the first course of attack is to find a suitable world to mine for materials that can be brought back to an outpost (or mercantile center on a planet) and sold, so that one can upgrade the ship to a respectable level of performance. (Hint: first upgrade to the best engines, then weapons systems, but only buy one set; since it is possible to transfer the systems between the starship and explorer anytime.) Along the way, the player assembles a crew and channels funds to the human fighting forces.

Probably the most important question to address with regards to *Protostar* is whether gaming consumers need another installment of this type of game. Is it just a rehash of old ideas or does *Protostar* offer something new? The answer is neither black nor white. *Protostar* delivers on some points and comes up short on others.

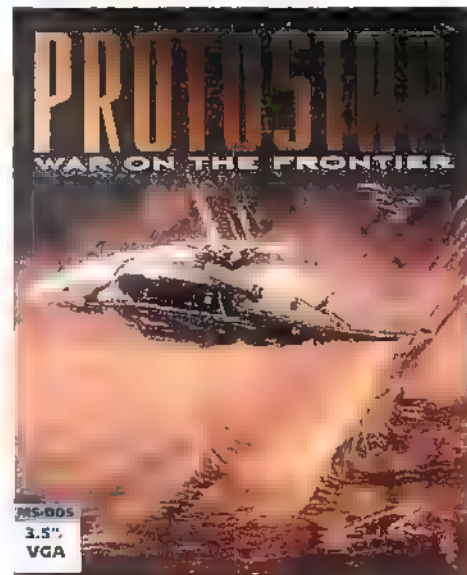
People Will Say We're In Space

First off, the graphics in *Protostar* are incredible. Tsunami took the "rendered by artists" approach rather than utilizing any digitized photographs, but they did a very convincing job of creating a world which suspends visual disbelief. The characters and aliens seem to come alive through the artwork, with select animations of facial features (such as the mandibles on the Ghebraant, a species of semi-sentient insects). Rather than create still-looking images, the artists went to great pains to set the characters in telling poses, and they weren't afraid to let the char-

acters have a rough-edge to their looks (our friend in the bar even appears to have a very painful shard of something, perhaps glass, embedded in his jaw).

The graphics really shine in the starship and explorer cockpits. Tsunami created a "cluttered but concise" look to the instrumentation, and the way in which the cockpits are lit makes them feel like properly claustrophobic command centers.

The control interface melds into this cockpit concept, giving the player easy control of every aspect of the game with intuitive mouse movements. The cockpits of both the explorer and the starship feature icons which



TITLE:	Protostar: War on the Frontier
PRICE:	\$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-25MHz, VGA graphics, 7MB hard disk space
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Vas Nakhout an
PUBLISHER:	Tsunami Media Inc. P.O. Box 790 Coarsegold, CA 93614 (209) 683-8266

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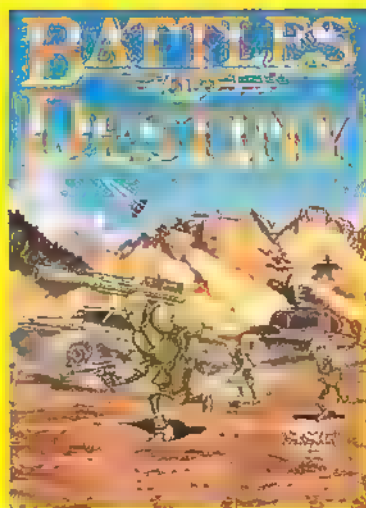
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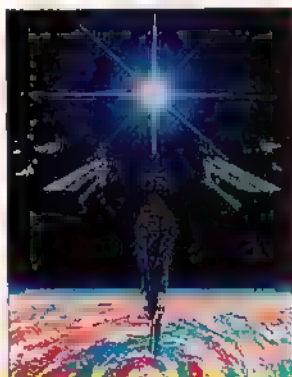
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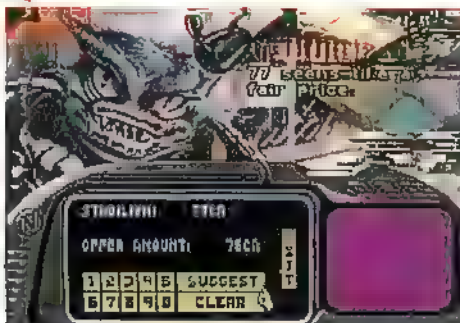
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call-up particular stations, from the navigator to the biotech officer.

Hello, Young Explorers

Space flight (and also flying over a planet's surface) is controlled by bringing the mouse over the commander's control pad and selecting it. The cursor then changes to a flight cursor (or weapons cursor), and any movement of the mouse is translated into starship control.

Combat is handled while in flight; the player selects the weapon with right-clicks of the mouse and fires with a left click. Defenses such as energy shields and dampening fields are activated by a single command to the tactical officer.

So how does the game play? Is it interesting enough to justify its good looks? A player who begins a game will find a double dose of relief and frustration as he or she opens the manual. The 23-page manual (13 of which don't directly apply to playing the game) is a short and concise introduction to the major systems of the game interface. The brevity is a welcome change from overly-long manuals which hold up game play, but Tsunami went a bit too far. There are precious few background notes in the manual, and a player will come away not sure as to what the point of *Protostar* is. Reading the splash-page on the back of the box gives more details about the actual reason for playing than anything in the manual. Also, for a game which is so sweeping in scope, the manual's brevity really doesn't provide for any practical examples of the myriad of situations a player may encounter.

Fortunately, Tsunami has two remedies for this: our disfigured bar patron, and a Help cursor. The barfly is actually a disguised game-encyclopedia. He generally appears in each bar of each of the three outposts (though occasionally he is absent, and once in a great

while others take his place), and he will talk to the player about nearly any subject of game importance, no matter what attitude the player affects. The help cursor allows a player to point and click on anything on the screen and get a brief explanation. This is a very helpful tool for learning the symbol-based interface, and should be a design feature on many, many more games.

Yet, after accessing all of this information, the actual point of the game still seems a million light years away. It's true that after quite a few hours of playing time, quests and larger purposes flicker into focus, but there never really seems to be that urgency to make the play seem as grand as Tsunami had hoped.

Although the streamlined interface and graphics are elegant, there are only really seven different screens of interaction, and while the faces change and the dialogue change, the game begins to feel repetitive well before it should. One case in point is the com-link to Hawking, the field commander of the Human Alliance. His dialogue seems very limited, and the exchange so uneventful (just channel him money in the beginning of the game), that a player will cease to pay close attention to the details.



Another weakness which borders on frustration is starship combat. While combat is simulated through the control center, and the feeling of three dimensional space is believable, combat lasts far too long. A simple battle between the player and a pair of Skeetch warships can easily last over 20 minutes (real time!), in which the player needs to fire dozens upon dozens of direct hits (with the most powerful weapon) for a kill. The combat would be exciting for a minute or two, but after that a player will tend to glance over at the desk clock wondering when it's going to end. After blasting the ships to atoms, the



player can launch a cargo drone to salvage the wreckage for materials, but the payback is hardly worth the combat time spent.

Shall We Fence?

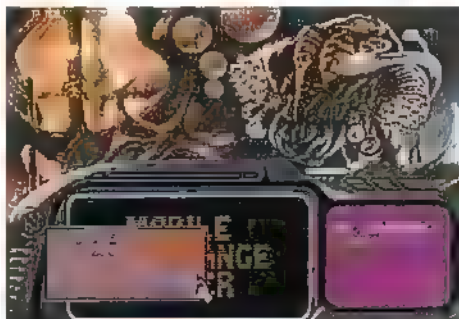
As a player works deeper into the game, the diplomacy aspect becomes the most interesting, with the various sentient races each possessing their own personal agenda which must be fulfilled before their allegiance can be turned to the human cause. It does seem, however, that most of the races prefer submissiveness rather than dealing with humans as equals or superiors. Tsunami has done a commendable job in scripting believable dialogue for the various races and only rarely do their retorts smack of "B" movie eloquence.

It may take some time to discern what a specific race wants or needs, and that task is one of the most enjoyable the game has to offer. As the struggle of the Human Alliance seems to move further and further away (but don't forget to keep sending cash infusions to Hawking, or the game will end prematurely), the diplomatic missions and intrigues between the various races make up the color and excitement of the game.

Getting To Know Space

All in all, *Protostar: War on the Frontier* is a solid, albeit uninspired game, and as in games such as *Starflight*, there are many worlds and beings to explore at whatever pace the player chooses. As far as breaking new ground, *Protostar* comes up short. Yet the beautiful graphics and intuitive interface allow for easy control. For a player well-seasoned in the sweeping "sf/pc epic" genre, *Protostar* will be a disappointment, but for a player anxious to see what the genre has to offer — and who hasn't played this sort of game before — *Protostar* would be an excellent place to start.

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Over There

Robin Matthews Launches a Detailed Investigation of France's Latest Export

by Robin Matthews

One of the real surprises of the last year or so was Infogrames' stylish chiller *Alone in The Dark (AITD)*. With its idiosyncratic approach and very unique look, *AITD* is a tough act to follow, and much is expected of Infogrames with their latest title, *Shadow of the Comet*. This title uses the original *Call of Cthulhu* license granted to

some interesting research notes from one Lord Henry Boleskine. Old Lord Henry (now deceased) was, in 1834, staying in the sleepy New England hamlet of Illsmouth. He was there to photograph the passing of Halley's Comet and made the curious observation that, as it passed, the star configuration was all askew. He dispatched his many findings to pen and paper and, lo and behold, before one could say "Silver Bullet," and just before the next passage of Halley's Comet, John Parker comes across his findings. The player-as-John-Parker, being similarly fascinated by both Halley's Comet and the findings of Lord Boleskine, travels to Illsmouth in 1910 to witness the next sighting of the Comet and to observe the strange goings-on.

Lovecraftian Cinema

The initial animated introduction is very good, with an imaginative use of camera angles and viewpoints. The style of the intro is very similar to the game itself and not a bolted-on cinema extravaganza to dupe would-be purchasers. Soon one finds him- or herself having arrived in sunny Illsmouth, welcomed by the local big-wigs and escorted to accommodations.

The graphic locations are carefully drawn and are reminiscent of those found in Infogrames' earlier *Eternam*. They are not as cluttered as those found in recent LucasArts games, and some of the object and item detail is exceptional. The town of Illsmouth forms the main area of the first part of the game, movement being either by cursor control or by selecting a map; all previously vis-

ited locations are shown and can be traveled to directly by using the map.

Actions are chosen either by invoking a menu bar or by using default keys. The early plot surrounds finding some photographic film to take snaps of the comet and trying to track down the original guide used by Lord Boleskine. Illswater is a fairly busy spot, and there are many inhabitants to speak to. Most of the conversations are short, however, and the system appears to be flag-driven. That is, until NPC 'A' talks about a fact, one cannot ask NPC 'B' about it. This does make the game slightly linear, but it keeps players from stumbling into areas of the plot before they should.

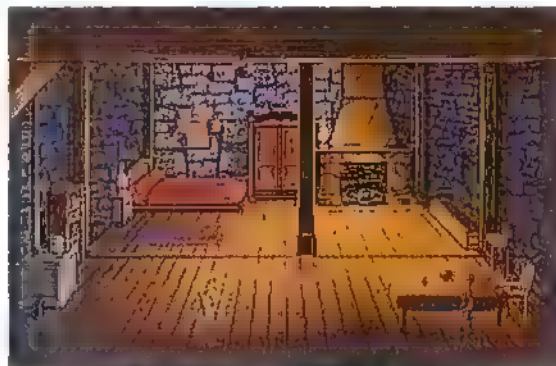
Sound effects are good throughout, and *Shadow* definitely wins a prize for the best seagulls yet in a PC game. They are so good one could almost put the mouse to ear and hear the sea. (Well, maybe not quite. Read on regarding the rodent situation.)



Infogrames. Originally, *AITD* was to bear the "official" designation, but the actual gaming system in that product became such a project in its own right that it was decided to save up the Lovecraft license for a second title — hence *Shadow of the Comet*.

Shadow is a graphic adventure in the traditional sense, using a clone of the standard Sierra/LucasArts systems as opposed to the revolutionary approach used in *AITD*. In common with that game and several recent releases, it is a member of the "severed limb/walking undead/ancient curse/don't bring a clove of garlic party" brigade, with a storyline covering many decades of satanic worship, demonic plotting and general misbehaving, using Halley's Comet as the backdrop.

A preamble introduces the hero, John T Parker: A budding scientist who has found



So far, so good. However, there is one problem with *Shadow* and that's the interface. Character movement is fine, responsive and quick, but this is by keyboard control only. The ruddy rodent is not supported — at least

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not in the European version. A couple of years ago this would only have caused a minor stir, but with thousands of users accustomed to the Sierra/LucasArts type of interface, the lack of mouse control is a disadvantage.

This is not too bad with character movement, but it is painful when it comes down to object manipulation. *Shadow* contains many high class puzzles, several necessitating the merger or combination of a couple of items. Without mouse support this becomes unwieldy and breaks up the whole flow of the game. In fairness, the storyline is so compelling that once within the game one forgets about the controls, but every now and then when one is struggling to maneuver an object or get to a tricky location, one instinctively reaches for that redundant rodent.

Cthulhuian Conspiracy

The good news is that the designers have paid considerable attention to plot—it is the cornerstone of *Shadow*. This game outshines almost all of its contemporaries in this area with sub-plots, mystery, subterfuge and some of the best characterization seen for, well, about 76 years or so! A rather naughty, dark Gallic sense of humor pervades, and I'm cer-



tain some of the NPCs are caricatures of Hollywood greats. Also used to considerable effect are zoom shots and flashbacks that flesh out some of the history and background of the town and its folk.

The strength of the storyline is achieved by good writing, rather than by reams and reams of text, but all critical conversations and discoveries are automatically noted in the character's diary. This aide memoir can be referred to at any time to check one's current progress, and will be invaluable for those allergic to taking their own notes.

Considerable effort has gone into the puzzles,

which are varied and in some cases more devious than old Drac himself. At certain stages, the linear nature of *Shadow* is exposed, as often the game will ground to a halt until a single head-scratcher is resolved. One or two puzzles may cause some real grief, but as they say in Infogrames, "C'est La Disque." Most will be sorted out by voluminous intake of decent coffee and a good Chablis!

In short, *Shadow of The Comet* is a high quality graphic adventure that offers nothing particularly new as far as technological advances are concerned and is, in some ways, a touch

old-fashioned. This may, however, not be a bad thing as it also returns to the concept of having a well-written plot, which, when combined with some excellent graphics, elevates it above the majority of today's all "whistles and bells" games. Its interface will be an initial computer-culture shock to some spoiled players, but *Shadow of the Comet*, like Halley's Comet, is something that doesn't come around that often and, when it does, is well worth seeing.

Shadow of the Comet will be brought to the U.S. audience by I-Motion in October. The U.S. incarnation will be offered on CD-ROM, and will feature some enhancements. CGW

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The world of shareware

In general, shareware games are crafted by small, home-based software houses working on a very limited budget. These game development teams, which usually consist of anywhere from one to several individuals, will occasionally "farm out" some of the work on their latest release to another small shareware developer with expertise in an area where they are lacking. However the work is handled, it remains largely true that games produced by shareware authors are primarily of the home grown or homebrew variety, the work of a few individuals. This month, *Best of the Rest* looks at the work of a homespun game company (consisting of several programmers who used to work at Epyx), **HomeBrew Software**.

Through the Gate

GateWorld: Volume One — The Seed Ship [IBMPC RT #32805] is a new shareware release from HomeBrew Software in the style of Apogee's *Duke Nukem* and *Commander Keen*. Programmed by Ken Rogoway and Dave Parquharson, *GateWorld* looks and plays much like the titles from Apogee, offering many hours of side-scrolling, arcade fun. The quality of these products, as well as the trilogy-based design, is very similar.

GateWorld commences with the forced landing of Captain Buzz Klondike on a mining asteroid. Rudely awakened from hypersleep by his on-board computer, Klondike sets out to investigate the intricate maze of mines below the asteroid's surface. As expected, it is not long before he is deeply involved in searching a mining complex to solve the mystery at hand and collect as much gold and gems as possible in the process.

As was already mentioned, *GateWorld* is a side-scrolling, arcade shooter. The object of play, apart from simply staying alive, is to avoid numerous traps and opponents while collecting as much gold and as many precious minerals as possible along the path to the game's end. The player must also make sure to keep his or her energy level as high as possible and maintain a decent supply of laser shots. These levels can be rejuvenated by collecting supplies along the way. Unlike many of these arcade titles, progress can be saved at any point in the game. When the player dies in *GateWorld*, he or she can return to the exact point where progress was last saved as opposed to the beginning of a level.

Graphics and sound are good by shareware standards, and acceptable compared to most commercial releases. The VGA graphics fall somewhere between *Duke Nukem* and *Ill of the Jungle* in quality of appearance — perhaps a bit shy of similar offerings in the retail marketplace. Music, on the other hand, is much more commercial in its quality. Surprisingly, support is provided for 11 sound standards including Ad Lib and Ad Lib Gold; Sound Blaster, SB Pro I and SB

Thar's Gold in that thar *GateWorld*

Arcade Fun From HomeBrew Software

by Chuck Miller

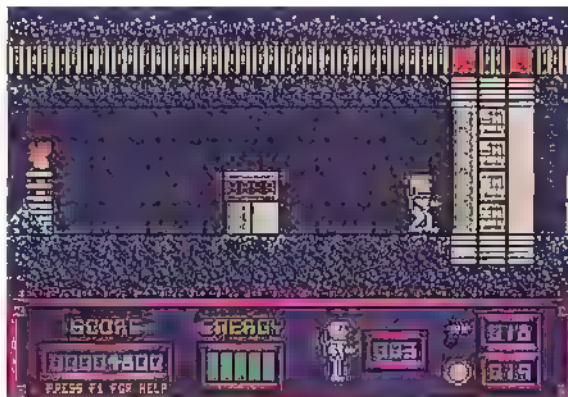
Pro 2; Pro AudioSpectrum and PAS16; and the Roland MPU401. Unfortunately, the digitized sound effects provided fall short of the music in quality.

Action gamers who have enjoyed Apogee's shareware releases will find HomeBrew Software's *GateWorld* a pleasant diversion. Though it can be quite difficult at points, it is a fun and addictive way to spend a few evenings.

Registration for *GateWorld: Volume One — The Seed Ship* and for the final two volumes in the trilogy is \$30.00, plus \$4.00 shipping and handling (CA residents must add sales tax). Please specify the disk size required — 5.25" 1.2M, 3.5" 720K, or 3.5" 1.44M. Upon registration, the player will receive *Volume Two* and *Three*, a hint sheet and the secret cheat code. *GateWorld* requires 560K of free RAM and VGA graphics.

For more information, contact:

HomeBrew Software
P.O. Box 1593
Vacaville, CA 95698-1593
(707) 451-9853 (for information)
(800) 242-4775 (for credit card orders only)



Gate World: Volume One

Again, it is time to draw this column to a close. I wish everyone the very best of gaming, and issue the reminder not to neglect the many fine shareware offerings available. So, until the next time, enjoy!

Games reviewed in this column are available through many distributors of shareware and public domain software, as well as on many national and private on-line services (GENIE RoundTable locations and file numbers appear in brackets when available). If you do not have access to these services, you can usually write or call the game developer for an evaluation copy. Remember, if you find a shareware game enjoyable, please register it with the author.

Send Us Your Best

If you have authored a shareware or public domain game for MS-DOS compatible, Macintosh (yes, we are now covering Mac shareware offerings) or Amiga computers and would like to have it considered for review in this column, please send two complete copies (preferably on 3.5" disks) with documentation and a cover letter to:

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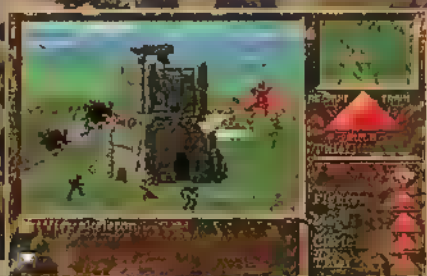
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AS THE WORM TURNS

Inching Along with Psygnosis' Creepers

by Ken Hill

Okay, maybe we computer gamers have to face a potentially traumatic disaster in order to get our blood racing. While we may be able to invest hours of game play and tons of creativity in staving off the genocide of hundreds of *Lemmings*, it seems to be awfully hard to get worked up over trans-



forming caterpillars into butterflies. In *Creepers*, Psygnosis has injected a new cast of cute characters into a *Lemmings*-style puzzle game, but their Wand of Programming seems to have fizzled, and it comes off as just another *Lemmings* look-alike with little new to offer.

The premise of the game is very simple. *Creepers* are little green caterpillars (complete with dancing antennae) which are ready to change into beautiful butterflies. Unfortunately, they don't have a very good sense of direction and need the player's help in reaching the butterfly bowls necessary for their metamorphic transformation. On each level, a certain number of creepers are released, and the player must maneuver them into their butterfly bowls to advance to the next level.



The little creepy creatures move across the screen either by crawling very slowly or by curling up into a circular shape and rolling along merrily. Their movement, however, can be aided with the use of a tennis racket. With this tool the player can give a creeper a good whack, rolling it into a ball, and moving it along the screen at a good pace. There are also two different types of fans in the game (one for above ground and another for underwater ventures) which blow the creepers in a

given direction. Finally, a creeper magnet can be used to pull the critters in the proper direction.

One of the game's few innovations is the "Creeper Peeper," also known as "Creeper-Cam." Clicking on this icon opens a window showing a close-up view of the lead creeper on any level. This is helpful for keeping track of the caterpillar clan while smoothing their round in another part of the screen. One can also place a static camera view on any part of the screen. This is a neat bit of technology, but it certainly doesn't add much to the game.

As in *Lemmings*, the player can use several interesting tools to get the little green gumbas on the right track. Horizontal girders are used to cover holes, inclined girders can be used as ramps or jumps, and vertical girders can block movement if necessary. Further, if the creepers are feeling particularly "springy," there's a creeper trampoline to bounce them on their way. There's also a bomb to blow holes in floors or walls when a level requires radical remodeling.

Each level supplies certain types and numbers of tools that can be used in its solution, plus an energy allotment. Placing a tool expends energy, as does a swipe with the tennis racket. A tool can be moved anytime after it has been placed. Though, there is a limit on how many tools can be used at a given time on each level.

Game play is very similar to its *Lemmings* cousin. Creepers are dropped or shot onto the screen one at a time. The player must quickly figure out how to use the various tools available to get them to the butterfly bowls without causing their demise along the way. At the successful completion of every level, one gets the password to the next level in case one wants to quit the game and come back later.

There are over 70 levels in *Creepers*, ranging in difficulty from "easy" to "brutal." The easy levels are designed to teach the game, and they come complete with a Professor character to provide guidance. Most folks will be able to get through the "easy" and "moderate" levels with a little practice (the early easy levels would even be appropriate for small children). However, the "challenging" and "bru-

tal" levels are caterpillars of a different color.

The game features a neat soundtrack which changes with each level. It's a credit to the musicians that I could play for several levels without being forced to turn off the sound to keep my sanity. There are also some cute sound effects provided in the game.



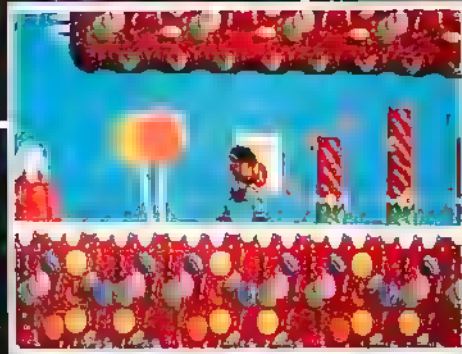
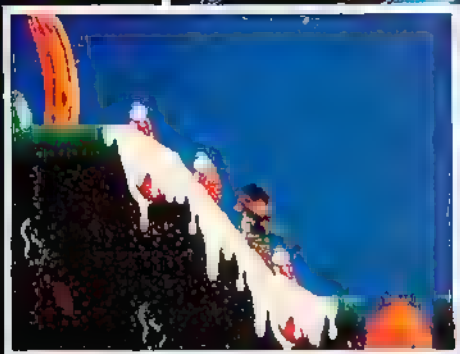
On the whole, game play is a mixed bag. Some of the tools do pretty much what one would expect, others are problematic. Placing a girder to block a hole or to provide a bridge requires painful precision; the slightest misplacement causes a rolling creeper to bounce off a crease when it appears as though it should roll smoothly along. Other tools ignore the rules of physics. The most notable of these is the combination of the ramp and trampoline. In an early level, one solution seems to require that a creeper bounce off a trampoline and up to a slanted ramp. However, the creepers insist on bouncing straight back down the slanted surface! Such defiance of common sense can be very frustrating.



All and all, *Creepers* is a disappointment. Something about the whole premise just doesn't work; the ideas here just aren't as fresh as they were in the original *Lemmings*. Like other games that have tried to cash in on *Lemmings*' popularity, it is uninspired. There may be some who will enjoy *Creepers*, but I'm afraid that its audience is limited. *Lemmings* freaks or die-hard puzzle nuts might get their money's worth from *Creepers*. The rest of us would be better off sticking with the far more lovable *Lemmings 2*. **CW**

TITLE:	Creepers
PRICE:	\$49.99
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386, 20MHz, VGA graphics, mouse
PROTECTION:	Code Wheel
DESIGNER:	Michael Herten & Steve Vestergaard
PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis Brookline, MA (617) 497-7794

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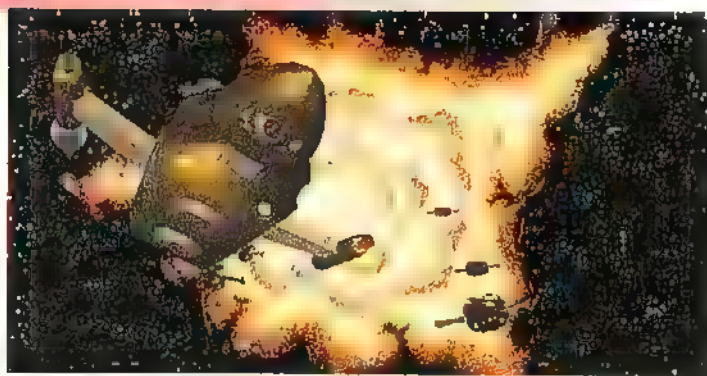


Review

ROCK 'EM, SOCK 'EM ROBOTS

A Heavyweight Battle for the Planet in Cyberflix' *Lunicus*

by Tony Reveaux



It was the year 2023 when the shovels of paleontologists digging through prehistoric rocks struck upon ancient artifacts of extraterrestrial origin. The terror began after one of the devices was activated, and a giant alien warship slid into orbit opposite the moon. As it rained robotic attack drones upon the Earth, it was evident that the warship's goal was to capture the planet's major cities and enslave their inhabitants. Hidden in the low-lying crater of Mare Imbrium, the crew of the United Nation's Moonbase Lunicus Station remained Earth's only hope.

In the Earth's corner is the Macintosh CD-owning gamer with a taste for arcade style mayhem. *Lunicus* is an action-packed excursion framed within a graphic adventure. The player can choose between beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert levels when enlisting into the crusade to sweep Terra clear of the iron invaders. First, the player must get the lay of the land on Moonbase Lunicus by spending a few days checking out the facilities, schmoozing with the other crew members, and attending briefings before he or she can zip into a power suit, hoist a blast rifle, or climb into the cockpit of a fighter. The cities of Los Angeles, Tokyo and Moscow must be liberated in turn. In each city, players find themselves inside a huge maze, representing a building in dire need of droid eradication. While droids are being slagged into recyclable bits, the player must search cabinets for supplies of shields, energy and ammo.

When all four floors have been cleansed, the player advances to the street where a tank awaits. The tank's primary target is the flying "hypnode." If the player can manage to hit it ju-u-u-st right, then one can confidently climb into the fighter in order to return to Lunicus for rest and briefings. The robocidal quest continues after the liberation of Moscow as the pushy robots infest the engineering deck of the base itself. After a little radical janitorial work, it's time to invade the alien Mother Ship and hit on the Hive city for a one-on-one with a mean alien Queen.

Leaping Lunicus

CyberFlix has developed a new and more efficient authoring system for *Lunicus* that was devised to speed the player over the slow file loading and lag times that plague most games produced on CD-ROM. In the installation process, the user is offered three levels of installation, each providing a tad more speed if one's hard disk can spare the elbowroom. This results in real time movement and action in the arcade and moonbase sections.

One can move quickly through the rooms and

corridors of *Lunicus* by using the keyboard or by selecting the navigation icon; click the homing cursor on a wall or door and one will automatically be moved forward to that position. There is, however,

no reverse. Nor is there a pause command. So, if one feels a sneeze coming on or the doorbell rings, the best way to "take-five" is to activate the Save function. When ready to roll again, the player can just click "Quit."

The fully three-dimensional attack robot sprites, in all their snarly varieties, come at the player as hard and fast as if they were pumped out from a floppy disk. Unfortunately, the fighting can get tedious after a while — especially since the player can't fire and move at the same time, and each explosion needs a couple of seconds to blossom and fade — but generally the pace will be exceeded only by one's adrenaline.

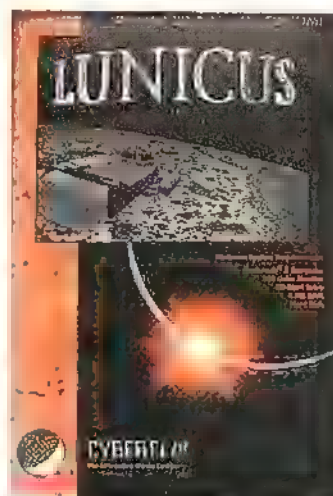
The real-time action of *Lunicus*, charging pell-mell up and down corridors and streets, keeps the player involved and maintains the illusion of "being there."

"What You See ..."

The quality of the graphic adventure content, however, is mixed. Graphically, there are at least four different levels of detail and resolution that one is dropped in and out of very abruptly. Depending upon one's processor speed, the short movies that are used for intros and transitions, such as spaceflights and landings, can be a bit jumpy. Further, the sound may sometimes be distorted. However, these elements do provide a nice pictorial and cinematic environment during those sequences.

The Moonbase and the city interiors are composed of rough-cut forms whittled out of low-level 3D computer modeling masses, with crash-test dummy mannequins for figures. When the player interacts with the other characters, such as Commander Molotov, Dr. Heisenstein, Raife, Terry or Sasha, it is by talking with them in a separate mode where they are seen in high resolution close-ups and speak with limited animation lip sync. One gets to them by clicking on their figures, which are of such low-resolution that they appear as clouds of crunchy pixels. These uneven pictorial transitions detract from the graphic adventure continuity.

An award-winning interactive story, *Lunicus* is not. One shouldn't expect the sci-fi movie moods of *Spaceship Warlock* or the professional, polished detail of *The Journeyman Project*. However, for what it is — a CD-full of fist-fighting action — *Lunicus* is capable of some fancy footwork and a solid punch. **CSW**



TITLE:	LUNICUS
PRICE:	\$ 34.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS:	Mac II or better, 4 MB RAM, 256 color monitor, CD-ROM drive, System 6.03 or later
PROTECTION:	None
DEVELOPER:	CyberFlix
DESIGNER:	Bill Appleton
DISTRIBUTOR:	Educap San Diego, CA (800) 843-9497

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Two, Two, Two Imps in One

Double Your Puzzling Pleasure in Sierra's *Gobliins 2*

by Allen L. Greenberg

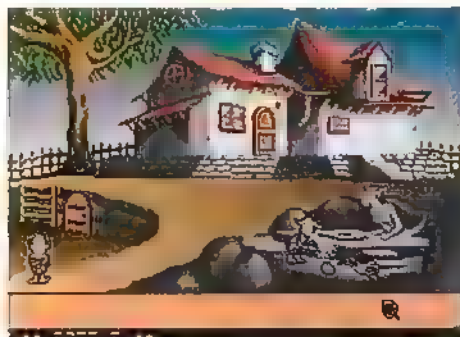


With the release of *Gobliins*, it was first revealed that tiny, mystical creatures had become an influence in governmental affairs. Saving their magical kingdom from what was sure to be a hefty dose of "political correctness," they cured the king of his terrible insanity. While we might have hoped that the goblins would have gone on from there to give all world leaders a clean bill of mental health, such was not the case. A brief glance at any respectable news service will quickly reveal that the creatures have instead attempted to offer marriage counseling to Great Britain's royalty, restore the Earth's ozone layer, and peacefully resolve a confrontation in a small Texas town. Before they could extend their world influence any further, however, the creatures have been



technical talents of the original three goblins. In their place are the good guy/bad guy team of Fingus and Winkle. Fingus is polite and follows his mission with sobriety, while the blue-hued Winkle is as much a prankster as he is an adventurer. Together, this fairy tale odd couple face an Alice's Wonderland filled with equally odd discoveries as they attempt to rescue the kidnapped son of their king.

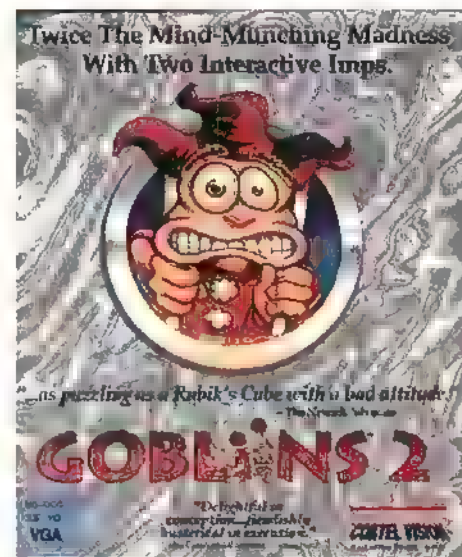
GOB2 is divided up into seven realms, each of which contains several locations. Solving the puzzles within each realm allows the game's title characters to escape and move on. The puzzles are largely mechanical in nature, and very few of them may be solved without careful thought. Equally few of the puzzles are directly related to the game's rescue mission, but their successful completion will guide the player, step by step, through the game. Generally, the goblins must obtain a key, or more likely a key object, in order to move to the next realm. The screens are littered with necessary intermediate objects placed either out of the goblins reach or under the protection of some sleepy-faced, bug-eyed guardian. The formula for retrieval of an item is consistent, although usually entertaining: One goblin either provides access to the object or distracts its guardian while his companion retrieves it.



called back to goblinland for *Gobliins 2* (*GOB2*). Once again, the king is in trouble.

Like the first game, *GOB2* is a puzzle-oriented adventure game. This one features the talents of two, rather than three, of the creatures (hence, the change in spelling of the game's title). Both goblins are under simultaneous control of the player who must now employ a two-pronged strategy throughout the game. Gone are the magic, athletic and

Fingus may politely converse with another character, although Winkle's crass Bowery Boys dialect and manners often provides interesting results. Whenever a strategy calls for hurting or humiliating someone, Fingus may refuse to cooperate, but Winkle clearly feels no such compunctions. For most of the puzzles, however, the goblins seem able to carry on without worry as to who performs which task. A favorite strategy calls for one of the goblins to act as a cannonball, flying from one part of the screen to another, while his



TITLE:	Gobliins 2: The Prince Buffoon
PRICE:	\$39.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286-10 MHz, VGA graphics, mouse
PROTECTION:	None
DEVELOPER:	Coktel Vision
PUBLISHER:	Sierra On-Line Coarsegold, CA (800) SIERRA-5

companion supervises and grabs whatever object comes free as a result. By the end of the game the goblins are joined by the king's son who then participates, to some small extent, in the adventure.



While many of the puzzles may seem difficult, the player is given ample opportunity to experiment. Death never occurs in the game, and there is never a need to back-track or start over. No object in the goblins' inventory is used up or discarded until it has been used properly. A jar filled with water contains an infinite supply until it is needed to hold some other liquid. These objects may also be handed from one goblin to the other without the two standing nearby each other. Any action the player wishes to take which might jeopardize their mission is strictly forbidden by the goblins, who will instead firmly shake

their forefinger while voicing a high pitched "No!"

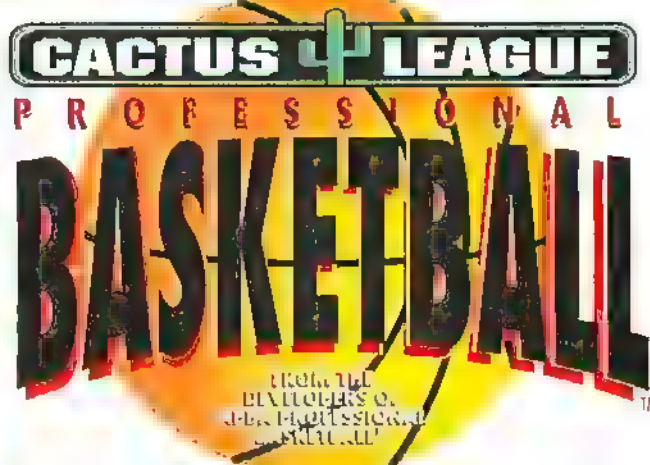
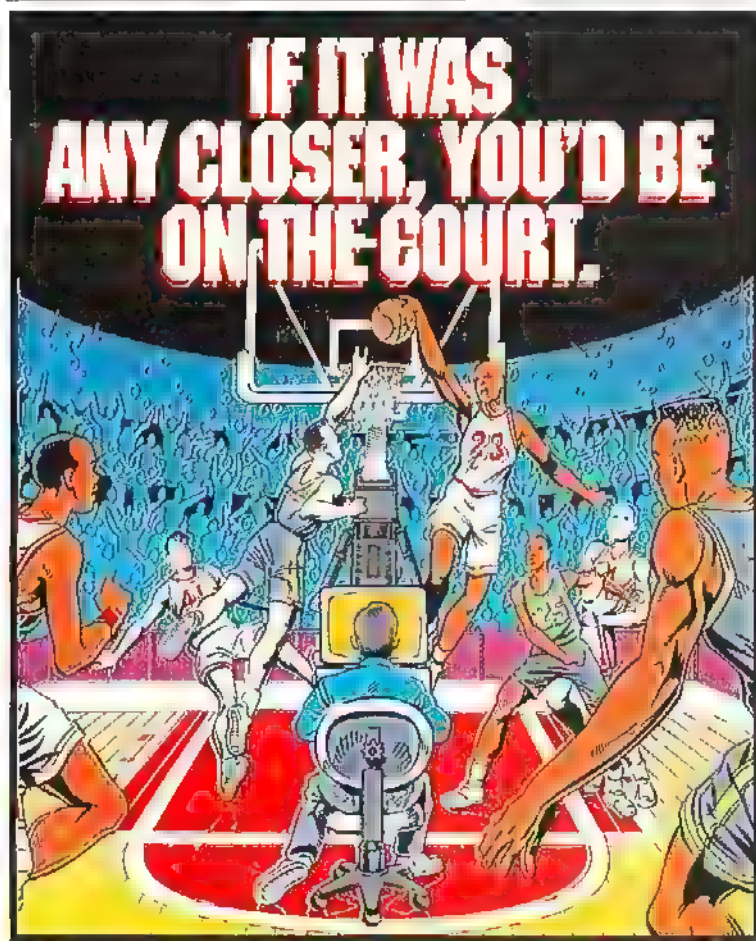
Interacting with the goblins is near effortless. Clicking on a goblin allows the player to then select a destination, object to take, or character with which to converse. Once a destination is selected, the goblin will casually walk to it without requiring the player to navigate curves or blockages. After giving a command, the player may then switch to the other goblin and give him a command, so that the two may act in unison. Timing is critical throughout the game and, when both goblins are involved, the player must learn exactly when to issue each command. A series of icons are available at the top of the screen which allow the player to save and load games at any time, select an item from inventory, travel to some other location, or receive one of a very limited series of hints. Successfully solving a puzzle earns the player a reassuring "thumbs up" from a goblin, while a failure results in a disgruntled sigh.

GOB2, as was the case with the first game, appears to have been inspired by the old Max Fleischer cartoons. Awkward, goggle-eyed characters populate goblinland, and they are liable to surprise the player with a sudden burst of animated mayhem. The goblins have also retained their trademark displays of boredom. They will resort to loud whistling or back-flips if they are left alone without instructions for too long. When they speak, the

characters sound much like a sports figure who has neglected to remove his mouth-guard before an interview. Fortunately, a translation of this comically indecipherable noise appears at the bottom of the screen.



Fans of the original goblins may be disappointed to discover that these goblins are far less specialized than their predecessors, and that this program falls far closer to a traditional adventure game. However, its challenging puzzles, sharp-witted entertainment, and enhanced ease of use still qualify it as a very enjoyable romp. Beginners, or children receiving guidance from more experienced players, as was the case with the original game, may indeed find it the perfect exercise. If there is a political lesson to be learned from these goblins, it is one of persistence: A failure is never really devastating as long as it's funny. **CSW**



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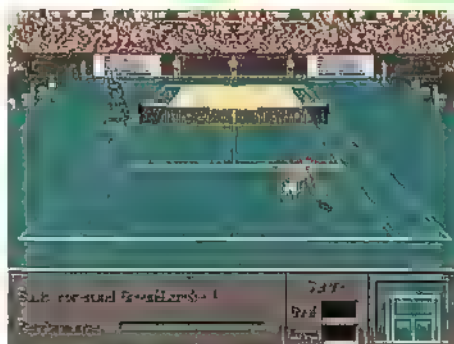
World Tour Tennis from Electronic Arts

by Wallace Poulter

Tennis was always a strange sport in our household. My mother (or as we say back 'ome, "me Mum") would complain about the amount of sports we watched during the year, and then, cheerfully sit in front of the tube for two weeks straight (and I do mean two weeks straight) watching Wimbledon. Therefore, while we ridiculed tennis throughout the year, during those two weeks it was either watch tennis or nothing at all. Margaret Court, Billie Jean King, Ille Nastase, Stan Smith, Ken Rosewall, Virginia Wade, and many more would be our entertainment. Slowly, I learned of the storied past, stars such as Fred Perry and probably the greatest, Maureen "Mo" Connolly.

Yet, tennis remains one of the few sports that has never made a great conversion to the PC. It is strange that tennis should seem so easy to produce on a computer, yet only *Jimmy Connors Tennis* has come close to a decent game. Cartridge tennis products have always been better mainly because of the multiple button control pads which allow the easy accessing of different shots. The latest to enter the center court of tennis simulations is *World Tour Tennis* by Electronic Arts.

First impressions are favorable. The attractive packaging, easy installation and multiple options all bode well. Add to this the fact that Electronic Arts Canada (formerly Distinctive Software) is behind the product, and a rival to *Jimmy Connors* appears to have been found. I might as well reveal my bias, however. I remain a big fan of the *4D Boxing* product produced by this stable that used a



similar polygon technology based on human movement.

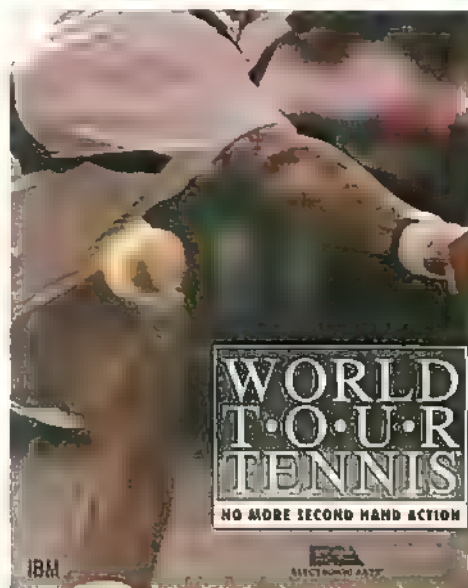
Once into the main menu, one's first place of business is the player creation screen. A player's Name, Birthplace and Birthdate are chrome features, but Height, Weight, Hand- edness and Abilities *do* impact the player's overall ability. A large player, while strong, will be slow on his feet. This will be particularly troublesome on the quick grass courts such as Wimbledon. A player's ability is divided into three areas: Speed, Acceleration and Endurance. Oddly, these terms are not defined in the manual. It would be instructive to know the difference between Speed and Acceleration, for example. Ninety ability points are available to dole out to these three attributes. A final piece of chrome is the physical appearance of the player character. A player's complexion, shirt, shorts, shoes, racket, racket strings and even wrist band can all be assigned colors.

Once the player has been created, one returns to the main menu. The next order of business is practice. After selecting one's player via the player list, one can choose the first drill. The drill description will give full details about the skill being worked on and the court surface. The surface, and therefore the speed of the ball, will determine the strength of a shot. The program keeps track of the player's performance by superimposing a yellow box over the target area. Each drill has a goal total of successful completions. One receives credit for each successful placement of a shot in the impact area, but loses credit for a wayward move. Although the

manual does not say so, I found that the computer wanted the drills taken in order. One must also remember that, in career mode, a player is allowed one practice session per week. These sessions, along with a player's overall game play, will improve his or her abilities.

Tournaments and Exhibitions are fairly self-explanatory. Exhibition play allows a player a little more leeway in that he or she gets to select the court surface, number of sets and opponent. A Tournament will place a player into the Tournament draw for his or her competition.

The Career option is at the heart of the game. Rank, Career Points and Career Earnings are kept track of and are saved automatically when one quits. As a player moves forward in Tournaments, his or her Rank,



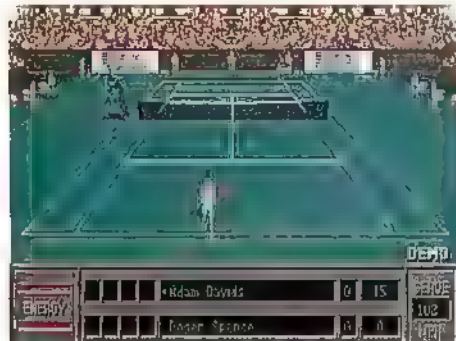
TITLE:	World Tour Tennis
PRICE:	\$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or higher, EGA / VGA graphics
PROTECTION:	None
# of PLAYERS:	1
DESIGNERS:	Stanley Chow, Jan Tran
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA (415) 572-ARTS



Career Points and Career Earnings will increase. Obviously, as in real professional tennis, the higher one's rank the "easier" the first couple of matches in a Tournament should be. However, as we know, that's not always the case.

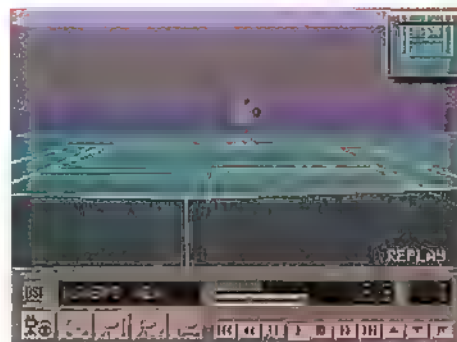
It would seem that combining all of these different factors should produce a sure-fire hit with lots of game play. Yet it doesn't, and it is hard to figure out exactly why. I, honestly, had to force myself to play the game to write the review. The animation that worked so well in *4D Boxing* just don't seem to work in the tennis environment. The bottom line is it just isn't enjoyable.

This seems a shame, because it *looks* pretty cool. Once in a match itself, one may chose a number of options including a toggle which switches between a full grandstand, an empty grandstand, or no grandstand. One clicks on



the player icon to toggle between an animated thin player, a normal player or a thick player. It is this polygon graphic representation that, in this reviewer's opinion, doesn't work for tennis. Unlike *4D Boxing* where the polygons worked very well after one got used to them, here one never get used to the polygons on the tennis figures. As strange as it seems, the distance at which one watches the player may have something to do with this perception. I would have thought the opposite would be true, polygons up close being unworkable, but strangely it seems that this is not the case.

Shot selection is determined by the direction the player is moving the joystick when one releases the shot key. The longer one holds the shot key down, the stronger the shot. Again returning to the manual, a diagram shows how to position the joystick to play: Topspin (joystick pushed up), Flat (joystick level) and Slice (joystick pushed down) shots. However, there are four descriptions accompanying the diagram. It notes "A lob is a high return shot that will usually buy you time to get into better court position." Yes, that is true. However, there is no instruction concerning how to make a lob shot! Further confusion rains throughout the manual where page 2 talks about entering "any of 69 tournaments." Meanwhile page 29 talks about a character competing in "up to 72 tournaments." Minor, I will grant, but it speaks to a lack of quality control.



Standard tennis strategy works well here. Keep the opposing player moving side to side and don't allow them to get set. Serve to the backhand wherever possible and use the advantage left-handers have on the tennis court. Finally, the lack of a drop shot again hampers the simulation.

World Tennis Tour is, I'm afraid, a disappointment. As mentioned earlier, it is a little difficult to explain why. An exceptional practice mode that actually teaches the player real control, combined with Exhibitions on multiple surfaces, a good Career module, and a proven polygon technology, should combine into something more than another dust collector. Instead, similar to another recent Electronic Arts release, *Michael Jordan in Flight*, *World Tennis Tour* has the heart of a technological breakthrough, but not the soul. **CGW**

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To Air is Human

Cactus League College Basketball & Cactus League Professional Basketball



In my dreams, I stand next to the parquet floor in the Boston Gardens, deftly maneuvering my personnel such that this sacred shrine of basketball has become my personal domain. My subconscious thinks I can replace Red Auerbach in the hearts of the Boston populace. I like the dream.

Sometimes, my ecstatic euphoria moves to the collegiate game. I stand in Rupp Arena, the hero or goat to thousands of (University of Kentucky) Wildcat worshippers. The religion of roundball flows through this crowd of bluegrass gentry and their progeny with an electrical sizzle and an explosive potential. I like that dream, too.

Yet, my conscious mind knows that there is no way that I will ever be able to coach the Boston Celtics, even George Plimpton-style for one exhibition game. My sense of reality error-checks my daydream and informs me bluntly that there is no way I can ever coach the Cats. Indeed, the only way to bridge the gap between fantasy and reality is to use the computer and try my luck at a solid statistical simulation. Fortunately, this has been made much more pleasant by the addition of two new basketball games, both from Cactus League Development Company.

To date, there really hasn't been a statistically accurate and graphically pleasing basketball product on the market. Usually a company aims for one side of the market or the other. To be sure, the Cactus games do not up the ante. They follow the trend by being a statistics-oriented product with a limited graphic display as part of the interface.

As a result, one's first impressions are mixed. The production values are limited but functional. Each game comes in a three-ringed binder direct from the publisher. The College game comes with the latest Season Tournament disk, and Conference disks are available from the publisher. Finally, each 50+ page manual has a lot of information, but it is *all* text and simply cries out for graphic representation of a number of screens.

The second impressions were heavy on the positive side. Diving right into the College version, I set up a couple of teams, place them in the hands of computer coaches, and watched

my first game. I was interested to see how the game played computer vs computer. The statistical options available are astounding. At half time of Duke vs Michigan the following line was available for Juwan Howard.

		3 Point				Rebnds									
Min	Fgm	Fga	Fgm	Fga	Ftm	Fta	O	D	T	Ast	Pf	Stl	To	Blk	Pts
15	2	5	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	6

The running commentary was quite entertaining and I noticed a lot of variation. Fouls such as Goaltending were called where appropriate.

Once familiar with the basics, I set about exploring the interface. The information is provided in a clear and concise way, with a basketball court placed in the middle of the screen. Above it is the current score, jump ball indicator, and an indicator showing whether either team is in the bonus. Below the court is the running commentary. To their respective sides are the teams with the five players on the court listed at the top of the screen, and the reserves at the bottom. Time Outs and Team Fouls are also displayed.

Hot keys are provided to access a number of options during play. These are: Offense, Defense, Configure, Display, Statistics, and the self-evident Time Out and Substitution.

The Offensive options are quite numerous. The pace of a game can be set to one of six different tempos, from Stall to Extremely Fast. Set plays can be run which designate both the optimum shooter and his shot location. Nine different defensive schemes may be employed, from zones to a steal/foul strategy.

The configure option allows the adjustment of the display speed and team colors. Game speed can be Slow, Medium or Fast, and, more importantly, Instant or Instant til 10 minutes. This can speed up play considerably as can setting the base configuration so that only the scores are displayed. Three coaching modes are also available: Computer, in which all decisions are made for the player; Override, where all decisions are still made by

TITLES:	Cactus League College Basketball and Cactus League Professional Basketball
PRICES:	College - \$49.95, Pro - \$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	640KB RAM, hard disk, DOS 3.0 or later
PROTECTION:	None
PUBLISHERS:	Cactus Development Company, Inc. 7111 Burnet Rd. Suite 214 Austin TX 78757 2216 (800) 336-9444

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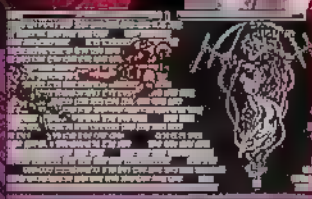
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System Requirements: 286 or better processor (386 recommended) with 640K RAM. Joystick recommended. Operating Sys.: MS DOS 6.0 or above. Monitor: SVI. Graphics: compatible with VGA. Sound: supported. Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Thunder Board, Pro Audio Spectrum, Gold and Sound Master.

R

This game is not for the faint-hearted. Contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors under 18.

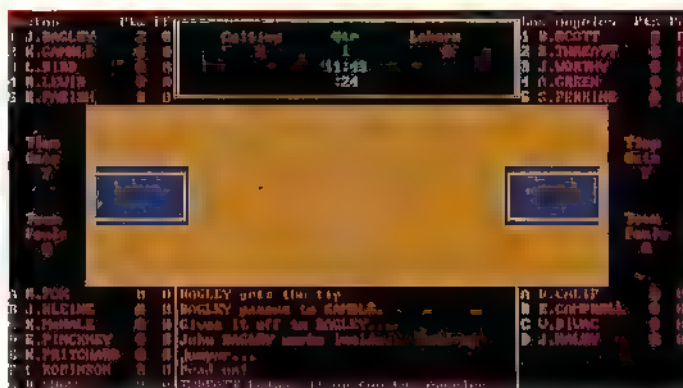
the computer but can be manually overridden; and Manual, where all decisions are the player's to make. One of the more amusing notes in the manual is a coaching tip which states "If you call too many plays, your players may begin to ignore them." Definitely not from Bobby Knight's school of coaching!

Initially, I played around with Duke vs Michigan, the National Championship game from the 1991-92 season. Duke won seven of the first ten meetings, yet I found a number of AI decisions puzzling. Both Duke players Grant Hill and Davis played after picking up a third foul in the first half. Davis, in one game, picked up a fourth foul with 14:41 to go in the game, yet remained in the contest. He subsequently fouled out with 7:49 to go. Meanwhile, Chris Webber of Michigan left early in the 2nd half with four fouls and never returned, even during crunch time at the end of the game. Michigan first broke through against Duke in a game where Laettner, Davis, G. Hill, Hurley, Jackson, Talley, Howard and Rose all fouled out. This robbed each side of equal numbers of players, but it left Webber to dominate over an under-manned Duke team. Subsequently, Michigan was able to win without needing foul trouble.

I used the 1991-92 season team disk for my numerous replays. The Fab Five of Michigan burst onto the scene that season after being a #6 seed in the Southeast regional. Laettner hit the incredible buzzer beater to pass Kentucky and little known East Tennessee State, and Southwest Louisiana beat Arizona and Oklahoma respectively. Below is a table which shows the seeds in each regional that year and the ranking of the team after numerous replays.

East	West	Midwest	Southeast
01 Duke (1)	01 UCLA (5)	01 Kansas (1)	01 Ohio State (1)
02 Kentucky (2)	02 Indiana (2)	02 USC (7)	02 Ok State (3)
03 U Mass (7)	03 Florida State (1)	03 Arkansas (4)	03 Arizona (6)
04 Seton Hall (4)	04 Oklahoma (3)	04 Cincinnati (2)	04 No Carolina (5)
05 Missouri (5)	05 DePaul (4)	05 Michigan St (3)	05 Alabama (2)
06 Syracuse (3)	06 Georgetown (8)	06 Memphis St (6)	06 Michigan (4)
07 UNCC (11)	07 LSU (7)	07 Georgia Tech (5)	07 St. Johns (8)
08 Texas (10)	08 Louisville (13)	08 Evansville (9)	08 Nebraska (7)
09 Iowa (8)	09 Wake Forest (6)	09 UTEP (8)	09 Connecticut (12)
10 Iowa State (6)	10 BYU (11)	10 Houston (13)	10 Tulane (11)
11 Princeton (13)	11 South Florida (9)	11 Pepperdine (10)	11 Temple (9)
12 W Virginia (12)	12 NM State (15)	12 SW Mo (11)	12 Stanford (13)
13 LaSalle (15)	13 SW La (10)	13 Delaware (12)	13 Miami (10)
14 Fordham (9)	14 Montana (14)	14 Murray St (15)	14 E Tenn St (14)
15 O Dominion (16)	15 E Illinois (12)	15 NE La (16)	15 Ga Southern (15)
16 Campbell (14)	16 Rbert Morris (16)	16 Howard (14)	16 Ms Valley St (16)

What is so interesting about the above is that it is in line with thinking at the time. In the East, U. of Mass was a surprise #3 seed. In the West, picking UCLA #1 made no sense at all. Analyzing that bracket at the time of the tournament, I predicted that Oklahoma would win it. Of course, Oklahoma was upset, although as the only "hot" team in their bracket, the pick made sense. However, what *Cactus League* shows us is just how big of an upset that was. In the Midwest that year USC received a #2 seed solely on the basis of Harold Miner. As with UCLA, that seed seemed high at the time, and now the suspicion is confirmed. Finally, the Southeast regional was loaded with both #5 Alabama and #6 Michigan grossly under-appreciated going on to the Tournament. Alabama in particular with Sprewell and Horry was my dark horse pick prior to the seedings. It was rather



gratifying to watch Alabama win it all in one of the first replays that I ran. While it is possible to interpret statistics in many ways, I was impressed by how close the teams performed to specifications rather than just pure numbers.

Tournament Schedules may be edited and seeds rearranged as needed. Probably the crowning glory is the league function. The ability to set up one's own leagues and conferences is an excellent tool for all Fantasy League commissioners. Not only can individual teams

be added to a new conference but individual players can be added and deleted from rosters. The possibilities for a college draft league are obvious, and one area of the simulation I intend to explore after the completion of this review. Imagine drafting Webber only to have him leave college after his Sophomore year (as he has).

According to the manual, the computer keeps track of 98 team and individual records. Returning to my multiple replays of the 1991-92 tournament, a number of now familiar names spring from the record books: Miner with the most points (56); The Shaq (Shaquille O'Neal) with most boards and blocks; Nick Van Exel with the most three-pointers; Hurley with the most assists; and Mashburn with the most steals. The latter I found fascinating, especially for a power forward. Other names in the record book include solid pros Robert Horry and Anthony Peeler.

Turning Pro

Now I freely admit that I prefer college ball to the pro variety, hence my enthusiasm over *Cactus League College Basketball*. Yet, the Pro version is nothing to sneeze at either. With no official NBA license, each Pro Team must receive a nickname prior to the first time start of the simulation. While it is possible to use NBA team nicknames, I decided to have a little fun. The Denver Boots recently played against the Detroit Breakdowns; the LA Rioters at the Cleveland RiverBlazers, and my personal favorite, the Golden State Surfers playing at the Charlotte Brontës. (I can see the ads already: "Before there was Air Jordan there was Jane Eyre.")

There are, of course, a number of differences in the pro version. The Defensive Pressure option becomes exclusively man-to-man (don't tell Don Nelson) and specific roles can be set for players concerning their participation in crunch time or whether they play with five fouls. The game comes with an Autoscheduler, which contains the entire NBA schedule by date, and an AutoRoster. If one so wishes, the Auto Roster will carry out all the transactions that took place during a season at the appropriate time. I will admit to having played only a half a season replay of the Pro version, but I was greatly impressed by the accuracy of the statistics. Scoring is usually pretty easy to do, but such stats like assists (Stockton, Kevin Johnson, Bogues, Hardaway) were very accurate. Now we all know that Karl Malone can rip a rebound, dribble the entire length of the floor, look at Stockton as he flies through the lane to slam the ball home, and somehow Stockton will get an assist, but even so, the numbers are right on target.

The *Cactus League Pro and College Basketball* games are primarily aimed at the stat-oriented fan. In this, they succeed superbly. The accuracy of the stats is impressive. The addition of graphics and clearer documentation would enhance the product even more. However, as it stands, one need look no further than the *Cactus League* to find statistically accurate basketball simulations.

A BBS is maintained by *Cactus League* at (512) 453-3155 for additions to the game, and *Cactus President* Ralph Rhoades is a regular contributor to the GENIE discussions in Category 21, Topic 32 of the Sports RoundTable. CGW.

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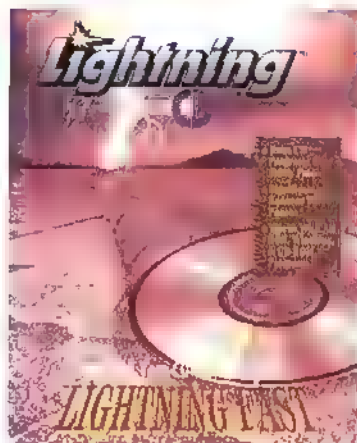


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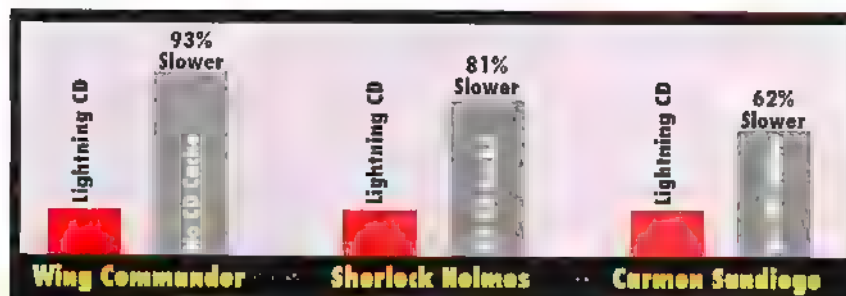
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The Great Underground Empire

Multi-player Role-playing on the Internet

by John J. Brassil

Multi-player role-playing environments have been available to the computer gaming public for several years now. Commercial networks like CompuServe, GEnie, and America On-line have large numbers of players who, linked by their telephone lines, come together every night to share telecommunicated fantasies in strange lands. But multi-player role-playing did not begin and does not end with these commercial networks. The oldest, largest, and perhaps best gaming of this sort occurs on the Internet: the worldwide, public access network that boasts more users than all of the commercial networks combined. For over 10 years, gamers and hackers have been forging their own role-playing worlds on this network, grouping together in virtual communities of people with common gaming interests.

Faithful readers will recall an article in the May issue which gave a brief overview of the Internet gaming community. One topic mentioned was the existence of Multi-User Dungeons, or MUDs. MUD is a generic term for a program which allows many different people to exist in the same cyberspace at the same time. Actually, the *really* generic term is MU*, because there are several systems which share the Multi-User idea, but don't use the "D" (i.e. MUSH — M.U. Shared Hallucination and MUCK, which is just a play on the word mud). In total, there are 20 or so different types of MUDs (or MU*s), according to the Totally Unofficial List of Internet MUDs (TTULOIM), making this a huge topic. We won't try to cover it all in this article, but we will hit all of the highlights and give a general feel for what MUDDing is all about.

The Dirty Details of MUD

What are the basic types of MUDs? Diku and LP MUDs are grouped under the heading of combat-oriented, "hack 'n' slash," adventure-based MUDs, while the TinyMU* variants are generally considered to be more

social in nature, stressing player interaction rather than questing. So, which kind is the most popular? Well, that really depends on what one is looking for.

Those who want adventure with human competition (I would say cooperation as well, but from what I hear, most quest-oriented MUDs tend to be pretty cut-throat) would prefer the LP/Diku style, which is generally combat-intensive. Those who simply want the chance to interact with some folks without having to worry about bad breath, ring around the collar, and all the other potential distractions of a face-to-face encounter will probably end up in a Tiny-MUD derivative. It should be noted, however, that MUDs (LPs in particular) are so flexible, it's really up to the gods and wizards of a particular realm as to what kind of environment the MUD provides. And, most MUDs allow you to "design" yourself to one degree or another. This can take the form of the race/class selection process familiar to the RPG community, or simply writing a short description of yourself which will be displayed when other players "look" at you.

So, essentially, MUDs are shared gaming environments which are run as servers on Unix hosts, usually at some educational institution, although there are now quite a few MUDs running on commercial hosts which provide Internet connectivity for a fee. I even got some e-mail from the UK chastising me for assuming that *all* MUDs were connected via the Internet. Evidently, there is a user community there that uses dial-up lines to connect to their server. In fact, there's no reason that a high-end PC (386/486) can't be used as the server (I just read about one, actually) and each of the three major MUD variants does, in fact, have a version written for the PC. By and large, however, MUDs are accessed through TELNET (a program which allows one computer to connect to



Illustration by Mark Poole

another), or through MUD client software, which acts somewhat like TELNET, and also deals with things like the nasty problem of other people interrupting the gamer and scrambling text while one is still typing.

MUDdy Deities

Time to explain gods and wizards. Hark back to those days when interactive fiction (because that's what we're dealing with here) was a single-player experience. Remember all those really cool room descriptions (a maze of twisty little passages, all alike) and wild NPCs (the cranky Wizard of Frobozz)? Somebody had to write all those descriptions, not to mention create puzzles to solve and hide treasure for the vigilant. In the MUDiverse, those functions are performed by the god/wizard class of user. Basically, those players who have the ability to change the structure or otherwise modify the MUD have wizard status. The god designation is usually reserved for the people who are responsible for the programs and data which make up the MUD — the administrators. The good news for the novice player (known as a "newbie") is that by gaining enough experience through questing, testing and lots of luck, one can become a wizard! (To become a god, one must start one's own MUD.)

It's worth noting that most of the MUDs out there pretty much allow free reign to the player, but there are several theme-based MUDs which restrict the kinds of characters and environments available. This can actually be a good thing, since it provides for a common background that everyone is familiar with.

Common background? How can something someone made up be used as a common background? It is pretty easy when the theme is Anne McCaffrey's *Pern* (there are several *Pern*-themed MUDs), *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Frank Herbert's *Dune* novels, the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *The Book(s) of Swords* by Fred Saberhagen, the *Elenium* series and the *Belgariad* and *Mallorleon* books by David Eddings, the *Xanth* series by Piers Anthony, or the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, among others. There are also MUDs restricted to the *BattleTech* universe, *The Neverending Story*, Japanese animation (Go, Speed Racer, Go!), and even one devoted to meditation (om mane padme MUD). Any Terry Pratchett fans out there? There's a *Discworld* MUD on a host in the UK just waiting for gamers to grab their luggage and log in.

We've been bandying about the word "MUDiverse" rather loosely here. (Actually, I made it up, but I think it captures the flavor of the MUD environment pretty well.) Just how big are these cyberspaces, anyway? I quizzed a couple of MUD administrators about this, and I was a bit surprised to find out that they didn't really know for sure. Evidently, it's not common practice to maintain a "map" that the



gods and wizards can access, but after floating some numbers by them, both seemed to think that about 1000 locations was about right. Even allowing for a good number of those being "East Road," "Farther Along East Road," and "Boy, You've Come a Long Way

Down East Road" kinds of places, that's still a very rich environment space.

How about the denizens of these cyberspaces? Am I going to meet the same swashbuckling fishmonger over and over again as I wander through the realm? Several MUDs have a user community of hundreds of people, with 30-50 players on-line during the peak evening hours. Even though many people have characters on more than one MUD, one is not likely to meet the same folks at every MUD visited, since many people only play one style or spend most of their time in a "home" MUD. In my eternal quest for statistics, I contacted the MUD FAQ author, Jennifer "Moirra" Smith, to get an idea of the total size of the MUD community. Since the MUDs tend to operate independently (although there is an InterMUD council which brings together the gods and wizards of about 50 of the LP MUDs), estimating like this is tricky at best, but she thought there were probably about 2500 active players at any given time.

Since I wanted to get the insider's perspective in addition to gathering general information, I posted a message in rec.games.mud.announce, asking for "tour guides" to show me around their MUDs. Within a day I had 40 responses, and I eventually heard from over 60 people! I ended up

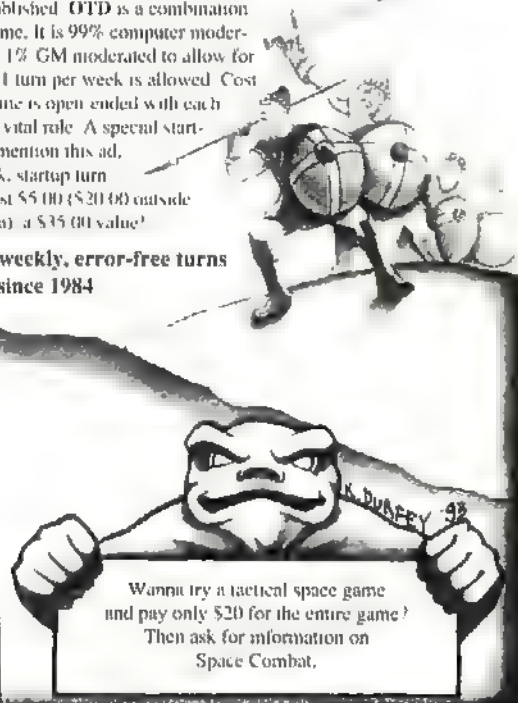
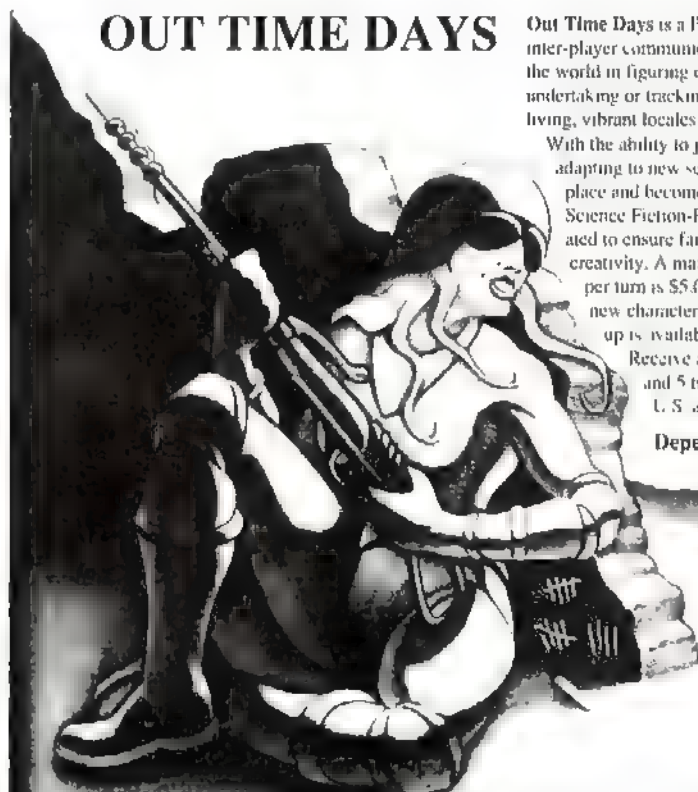
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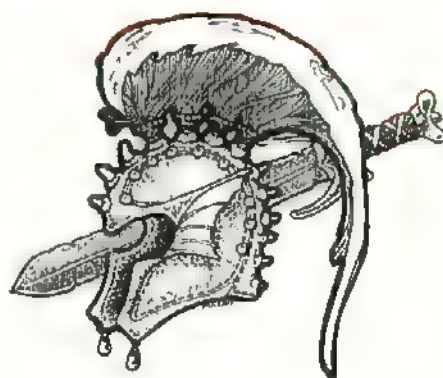
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spending about six hours on-line at two different MUDs, one of which was not open to the general public at the time I visited. Coincidentally, they were both located on a machine in Seattle operated by a company called Connections, Inc., which provides Internet access.

Welcome to My Nightmare

The first MUD I visited is called *Nightmare*, and my helpful guide was the Archmage Descartes the Borg (I told you anything goes!). Descartes in real life is George Reese, a Master Control Operator at the University of Maine, although since he says he spends 30-40 hours a week working on *Nightmare*, he may not have a real life. *Nightmare* is an LP MUD with a traditional RPG feel to it. George had trouble dialing in at the appointed time, so I enlisted the aid of one of the "normal" players and found my way to the large tree which is home to the Wizard class. After inducting myself as a novice mage, I left a note for Descartes on the Wizards bulletin board and left the MUD for a while. When I returned, Descartes had solved the riddle of the Mad dening Modem and proceeded to give me a tour of *Nightmare*. He introduced me to an NPC he had written (being the Archmage, he was able to teleport us to any location in the MUD — sure beats walking!) that is used to send fledgling wizards on their first quest. It scanned my input for keywords and when I



asked the correct question (with a little help), I was sent on a quest to retrieve the stolen Orc Slayer. *Nightmare* seems to be the sort of world that would appeal to the type of gamer who enjoys the *Ultima*-style CRPG.

My second stop was on *Dreamshadow: The Legacy of the Three*, which has been under development for over two years! It should be open to the public by the time you read this, and there's something there for everyone. *Dreamshadow* was founded by three students at the University of Michigan, and even

though it's an LP MUD, it has a very socially-oriented flavor to it. It has a well defined operational structure, including senior administration with titles like "Technical Director," "Comptroller" and "Operations Manager." *Dreamshadow* actually has an Academy which all "officers" (those with the ability to create and modify) must attend. Currently there are 18 builders in addition to the senior staff (Soulsinger, Daina, Reeshau, Kit, and Mickelian were present for my tour) busily working on creating new worlds. *Dreamshadow* is actually a true MUDiverse with a central nexus connecting many different worlds. The location descriptions in the places we visited were absolutely beautiful and representative of the thoughtfulness which has gone into the making of this fantastic world. Also present on my tour was Soulsinger's white wolf, Borealis, an NPC which not only wagged his tail when I petted him, but was also "smart" enough to record my entire visit for posterity!

I would like to thank all those who responded to my call for help, and extra special thanks to Jennifer Smith for the FAQ, Scott Gochring for compiling the MUD list, George for his time on *Nightmare*, and Marc, Cathy, Matt, Mike, and Kit for sharing *Dreamshadow* with me (the fireworks were great!) And to all latent wizards out there — it's never too late to play in the MUD! **CGW**

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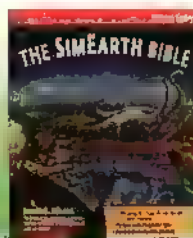
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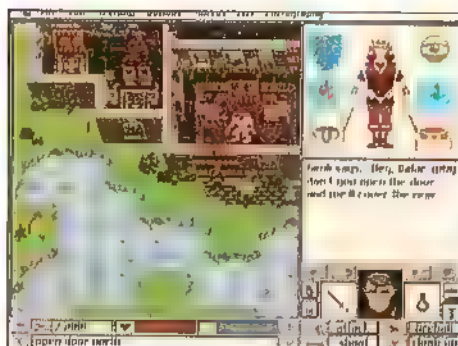
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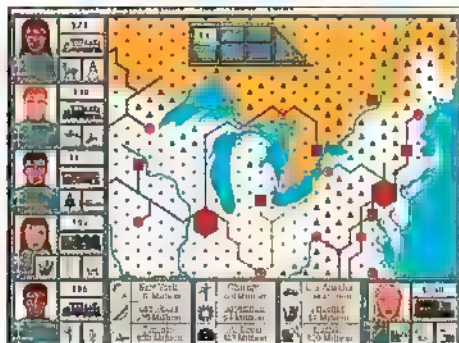


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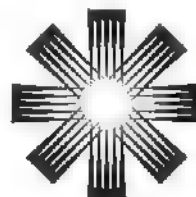
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Letters from Paradise



Alone in the Library

Regarding Scorpius's column on *Alone in the Dark*, it is possible to read De Vermis Mysteris without dying. You just have to read it while standing in the pentacle in the "secret" room in the library. Also, she is wrong to suggest that one should not use the cavalry sabre because "it is prone to breaking." The sabre can still serve its special function later in the game if it is broken, as long as you keep both pieces of it.

Lemuel Cork
Parts Unknown

It's nice to have contrasting perspectives from more than one reviewer on some of these issues (See Cork's review in CGW #107). We see by your postmark that you aren't far from the legendary haunts of Lovecraft himself. Try to stay away from dark houses and mysterious stone formations and your name might even appear in our pages again.

"Dawg" On It

I read the article on Memory Management in the June 1993 issue of CGW and I couldn't get the BOOTME.COM to work. It said ERROR when debug got to the line that said C BX or something like that, and error on every line after that. If there was a typo in the article or you can tell me how to do it another way, I'd appreciate it. I found Mike's article very helpful and I'd like to see a series (like Scorpion's View) in future issues.

Casey Harrison
PRODIGY user

We can't promise a regular column on technical issues, but we have "Dawg" (Mike Weksler) hard at work on several other special articles. We sometimes have to roll up a newspaper to get him to finish those articles, but he's usually "Best of Show" when he gets them done. As for the typo, Dawg answers:

Attention all Neophyte Memory Commanders:

In my "Dawg on DOS Memory Management" article, a typo occurred in the code for the BOOTME.COM program — bad Dawg! Here is the assembly code as it appeared in the article:

```
N BOOTME.COM
A 100
MOV BX, 40
MOV DS, BX
MOV BX, 1234
MOV [72], BX
JMP FFFF:0
R CX
11
W
Q
```

In order for DEBUG.EXE to assemble the above code, a space should be included between the JMP FFFF:0 line and the R CX line as follows:

```
N BOOTME.COM
A 100
MOV BX, 40
MOV DS, BX
MOV BX, 1234
MOV [72], BX
JMP FFFF:0

R CX
11
W
Q
```

Support Woes

I am writing this letter to vent my utter frustration regarding the inadequate support provided by software game companies. I have recently returned several games when all I could get was a busy signal on the so-called customer support phone number.

Since this has occurred with three different companies, I can only reach the conclusion that these are pseudo-support lines, where they have one person assigned to the support line which is clogged with incoming phone calls. Why else would a phone be busy eight hours a day every day and one never waits more than two rings when calling the sales number?

Why is it, after filling out warranty registration cards in which I give them valuable marketing information such as machine type, hardware configuration, software I own, magazines I read, etc., I never hear from them whenever a major bug is revealed. Instead, I find out from a game review. Then, to top it off, I'm told I have to pay to get the debugged version. Why can't I send in my original disks and have them exchanged for the new version?

The software industry is in the same posi-

tion as the auto industry was during the '50s, "We own the market and the customer will take what we give them, poor service and all." Customers voted with their money as soon as a better product showed up. You guys better wake up. All it takes is for a **Sega** or **Nintendo** to improve their games just a bit more or come up with a machine with a little thing like a mini-hard drive (or give me a system where I don't have to reconfigure my memory in order to install the latest hot game) and you guys are dead. I think it's high time you had your smug faces rubbed in the dirt.

Tom Synnott
Bound Brook, NJ

Red Skelton regularly used a particular line whenever a joke or gag would misfire before his live audience, "We just do 'em folks, we don't explain 'em." Since your letter is predominantly an open letter to the industry, we hope you don't want our "smug" faces rubbed in the dirt. We will risk "explaining" one aspect of the customer support problem. The earlier in a product's release that a customer tries to call (assuming that it has bugs and had reasonably good initial sales), the less likely that customer is going to be able to reach the support line in a speedy fashion. Customer support may have open lines for weeks and then, with the sell-in of a new product that pushes the envelope, even the best staffed department can be under an avalanche. In fact, the terrible news for them is that the longer a customer has to wait to get through, the angrier that customer is when they have to deal with them.

As to why you might be able to get into the sales line easier, there's a simple explanation for that. There are many ways to buy a product besides a direct call to the publisher. Indeed, one doesn't usually even get a discount when buying direct. So, there aren't as many demands for the direct sales lines and staffing requirements are less.

Your points about customer backlash against the disk-based software industry are well-spoken, however, and we know that many of the companies we have visited of late are attempting to address quality control and customer support issues as a high priority. Maybe your letter will provide in-

centive for those companies which have not yet done so.

The 5-Minute Consumer

Your magazine is the only one that takes me more than five minutes to read.

J. Reaban
Melbourne, FL

Thanks for the compliment. We just called up Scientific American and gloated.

Star Quandary II

After reading the rave reviews of *Star Control II*, I rushed out to purchase myself a copy, promptly installed it on my system, and started playing it like a true addict. After many hours of intensive struggling, however, I now stand ready to completely wipe the last byte of it from the hard disk, then proceed to hunt down the two culprits, er, programmers and cause them grievous bodily harm with large destructive implementations.

The adventure itself is not particularly difficult. Nor can the minor deficiencies, say, the lack of an auto pilot for interplanetary travel, not be accustomed to. My biggest gripe is the save game feature, which can only be described as "completely stupid."

After getting warmed up in *Super Melee* and having a couple of trial runs under my belt, I embarked on a serious effort to solve the game. The first session lasted many hours and, after saving my progress, I switched off the computer, implicitly certain that it has been tucked away in some corner of the hard disk *safely*. Unbeknownst to me, that was my first mistake.

The next time I went back to *Star Control II* and tried to reload my save game, it *wasn't* there. I stared in disbelief, since I was sure that I had saved the game the night before. After looking around the directory using DOS and even PC Tools, the save game file was still nowhere to be found. Getting a little irritated at this point, I broke out the manual to check if I had done anything wrong. The rulebook did not mention anything I have to do before or after I save a game.

So, there I was, forced to start again from scratch. After going through the same bootstrapping process, again I saved the game and switched off the computer, which was what I was accustomed to do after long gaming sessions.

Imagine my agitation when I could not find the save game file again. There was nothing wrong with my system because everything else works, but a thought was slowly taking shape in my mind. What if the program writes the save game files to the hard disk only after I quit the game instead of doing it as soon as I ask it to? Unlikely though it seemed like, because no programmer in his or her right mind will do a stupid

thing like that, I decided to try it out. The result of the experiment almost made me scream. Not only my suspicion turned out to be true, but there is no mention of it anywhere in the manual. I was also surprised that this was not pointed out in your excellent publication.

Imagine a poor soul who spent 16 hours in his first session playing the game and saving the game every step along the way just as the manual suggested. As he was playing the game, a brownout struck and forced his computer to reboot. Would he be happy when he found out that none of his save game files were written to the hard disk? What good is the save game feature if it does not protect me against power outages?

The tale does not end here, however. After taking some time off to calm down, I restarted the game with earnest and made steady progress. To make a long story short, I found out one day with horror that the program actually invalidates an old save game file that already exists on the hard disk, when you save a new one over it right away and, of course, it does not write the new one until the game is properly quit.

I question the wisdom, or the lack thereof, of this unsafe save game function. My progress has been set back many times because of it. The time wasted, coupled with the mental anguish caused by finding out "hidden features" of the program has greatly diminished my enthusiasm for *Star Control II*. I hope *Accolade* will fix this problem in

future releases of this game and send us a free patch.

Felix H. Luk
Kowloon, HONG KONG

Normally, it is best to actually "Quit" out of a game rather than turn it off. Even in business software, it is possible to garble data and cause unnecessary problems by turning the computer off in the middle of the execution of a program. Nevertheless, we are firm advocates of the gamer having the option to name numerous saved game positions and we hope you get your wish on this one

Go, Go Gadget Speech

In the June 1993 issue of *Computer Gaming World*, the "Taking A Peek" section featured a review on one of our titles, *Inspector Gadget Mission 1: Global Terror*. The review contained an error I would like to bring to your attention.

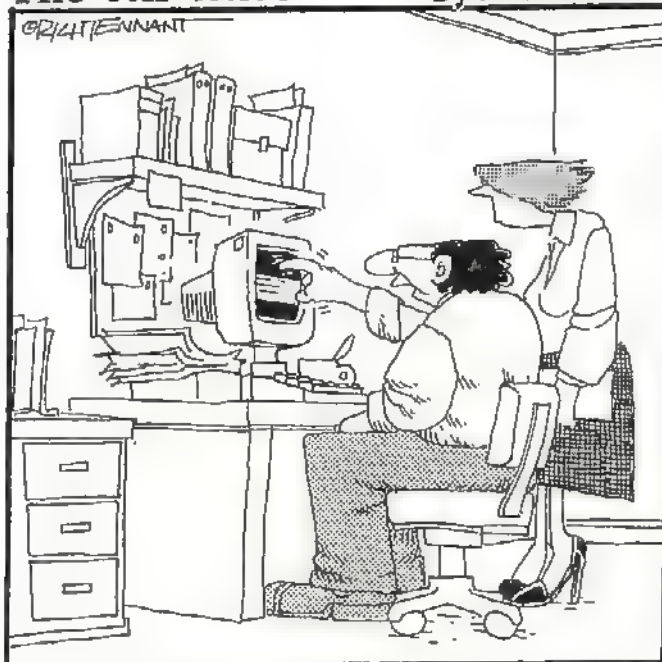
The review states, "The CD-ROM version adds music and speech..." While it is true the CD-ROM version of *Inspector Gadget* does have music and speech, so does the diskette version (both 3.5" and 5.25"). From the review, a reader would draw the incorrect conclusion that the diskette version has neither.

Todd E. Cook
Azeroth, Inc.
Director of Marketing

Missed it by THAT much. Thanks for the note. CGW

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"HOLD ON, THAT'S NOT A ROMAN LEGION, IT'S JUST A BOOGER ON THE SCREEN."

"I Came, I Played, I Conquered"

Of Course, You Know, This Means Wargaming!

by Alan Emrich



Art by Rodger MacGowan, Copyright 1993 R&M Graphics



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Once again, it's another great month to be a wargamer. This time, I've found myself spending uncounted hours with SSI's upcoming *Clash of Steel*, a strategic WWII in Europe game that I've previewed a little further on in this issue. Also, Micro-Prose has glommed onto a strategic space game that is so darned addicting that I think someone must have laced the beta copy with some kind of narcotic. Hopefully I can stop playing it long enough to preview it next issue.

Old Business

From the "everything old is new again" department, *Three-Sixty* has shot over a late beta of their revision of *High Command*. The graphics and interface have been considerably punched up, but I need to wade into the game for a while to see what kind of improvements have made their way into the AI. I loved the original Colorado Computer Creations version of this game, and since they're also doing the *Three-Sixty* version, what could go wrong? (Don't answer that!).

For people (like me) who are using HPS Simulations *Aide de Camp* product, Scott Hamilton has released a free upgrade. Called version 1.13, it adds hexes instead of squares, a new hex numbering system, some improvements in the "paint" features, and several other minor tweaks. To obtain a copy, make sure that you're registered and send a blank, formatted 3.5" IBM disk and \$.52 return postage (the address is in the manual). Also, an unofficial *ADC* BBS has sprung up in South Carolina. The number is (803) 356-8101 or 8102. I've uploaded my *A House Divided* there, in case anyone with *ADC* wants to try it out. (Don't ask me for a match, I've got my hands full playing Michael Hinde in Stockholm, Sweden via CompuServe right now!)

New Business

Be sure to read this issue's CES report for the latest on the computer wargaming front. New releases, particularly from QQP, are hovering out there. With Gary Grigsby hard at work on an improved *Second Front* (a war-

gaming classic, if there ever was one) and Changling Software converting their *Pax Imperia* from Mac to IBM, my biggest problem right now is finding fresh excuses to give my new wife <grin>. Actually, for the many who've asked, married life is great. We're a couple of happy gamers. Thanks again, TSN, for bringing us together!

One late tidbit is that Steven D. Jones of SDJ Enterprises will be revamping his *Big Three* and *La Grande Armee* wargames. Beginning with *Big Three* first, both games will be redone in a graphically enhanced windows format. They will include sound support, modem support, and his first effort at programming wargame AI. He says "It may take upwards of a year, but my heart's in it." We wish Steven all the best.

What is really happening 'round these parts, however, is the *Computer Gaming World* / *New World Computing Empire Deluxe* Inter-Network Tournament. With the first round over and half the entrants gone, there were some tremendous battles fought. First of all, let me give some statistical analysis of the first round. I don't have complete reports from all the matches (some players merely reported the winner with no other information), but from the information I have, here are the figures:

Game lengths ranged anywhere from 21 to 197 turns, with the average game lasting 86 turns. No game went to the end to be scored on points. Instead, matches were decided by conquest of capitals and players surrendering hopeless situations.

In terms of color match-ups, there is more of a pattern developing. In the Red vs. Green games, Red took three and Green four. There were fewer Blue vs. Green games, with Blue taking four out of five. Most of the action was in the Red vs. Blue matches. Here, Blue dominated with seven wins to only four Red wins. (Something tells me that those paying for the calls and, thus, choosing color first will be opting for Blue from now on.)

Messages from the Front

The best part of the tournament is the combatant's tales of battles won and lost.

There is nothing like a wargamer in "historian" or "propagandist" mode when they describe their glorious victories or disastrous defeats. To me, this is what this tournament is all about. So, without further ado, allow me to quote a few of the commanders fresh from the trenches of *Empire Deluxe*.

"The plucky blue forces led by Jeam 'Beamer' Garvey defeated the evil red forces of Noah 'WizBang' Best by capturing all of the capitals on turn 101. While blue luckily captured the computer's green capital on turn 44 with a lone infantry unit, turns 60-70 saw both players with units outside of all three capitals. Blue managed to sink both the red and green transports while turning back wave after wave of red armor."

"Alas, I let down the honor of GENIE by losing in the first round to a C\$er! The game was a real hoot, though. I was red and he was blue. I used my patented 'Dondo Gambit' where I send my plane over the ocean and troll for enemy transports. I *knew* he'd nosey towards the big island with the two 130% cities on it and, although it exceeds the range of a fighter, if you sink the other guy's transport early, it could be lights out."

"Sure enough, there it was — the enemy transport. And I didn't sink it! (Sigh, why is such genius wasted on the unlucky?) After that we settled into a long slugfest where I had a couple of opportunities to take the third capital and blew them both (with armor yet!). My opponent was a true gentleman and it was a tremendous experience."

Dondo's opponent, "BobP" wrote back that "Don tried for my transport within the first two moves, but I managed to elude his fighter and he lost his eye in the sky. I got the green capital but lost it both to green and to Dondo several times. I believe the green capital ended up the game with a 37% production efficiency!"

Matt Clouser sent us this "press release" on his game:

"WAR IS OVER!"

Blue Forces Grab Surprise Victory!

BLUE CAPITAL CITY, TURN 122 — In the late hours of turn 121, Klausen's blue forces dealt a quick end to hostilities by occupying Baker's green capital city in a lightning raid. This was following blue's capture of the red capital (occupied by green) by amphibious assault a mere 15 turns earlier.

Representatives from all three powers expressed surprise at the quick victory. Green's forces held a decisive advantage in the field and at the factories (and had since turn 80 when they occupied most of the mainland — including red's capital city while repeatedly thrusting at forces defending blue's capital).

Unconfirmed reports from the field suggest that the final victory raid on green's cap was actually a small diversionary force placed in green's rear. Unexpectedly, they defeated a superior green force to the south of that city, thus setting up the win." This was from the *Disassociated Press*.

Dan Hayden told his story as so: "There we were, slugging it out over the city in the valley. He took it."

I sent two dog-face units over the mountains. They arrived, tired but ready. Next thing you know, the city's mine and the troops cheer as they congratulate each other on a job well done.

[RING!] "This is Command Headquarters. Enemy infantry approaching from the west!"

Fortunately, our 1st armored arrives with alpha wing covering the skies overhead. 'Can we take 'em?' radios the pilot.

'Does a bear [bleep] in the woods?' replies the confident tank commander, boring down on the enemy position.

The pilot saw it all. When 1st armored was massacred by the enemy infantry, he dove in for revenge screaming 'You shall pay dearly for your impudence, infantry scum!' (Clearly, the pilot was one of those *college boys* the sergeant had warned us grunts about.)

We watched as the planes were torn from the sky, their once proud steeds reduced to fragments of dark disgrace.

This was the beginning of the end. The city fell with much weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[RING!] "This is 43rd infantry to HQ. We have failed. Enemy stormtroopers are marching on the capital. We're done for!"

An aide rushed in. 'Enemy approaching from the north, sir.' And then another. 'Enemy approaching from the east, sir.'

The dumbfounded commander put down the phone, glanced at the reports and looked up at the red glow of the situation map. 'May God have mercy on us all' were his final words."

Then there is the *really* tragic tale of Paul "The Hammer" McClellan. He took all of his handicaps in production so that he would be commanding the best fighting force on the board. Ironically, however, he lost virtually every land engagement (and the game). Even his opponent, John Longshore, felt a bit guilty at winning in the wake of such bad luck on his opponent's part. Another commander, caught in a see-saw battle, kept flinging his units into it with a comment to his opponent that "By God, if we throw enough peasants at them, they'll run out of bullets sooner or later!"

Lines like "It seems that Alan's defeat was due to his focusing on the computer player and not spending enough time expanding" and "I won primarily by building up strength off-continent and then performing surgical attacks on the two capitals" were offered for advice. Mark "Skulker" Carroll (co-author of *Empire Deluxe: The Official Strategy Guide*) won by (surprisingly) building transports and raking the capitals from their seaward sides.

There were even a couple of matches by opponents agreeing to play a best 2-out-of-3 series. It takes true wargaming gentlemen to agree to a mini-match within a tournament, and my hat is off to those players.

However, the best excuse for losing came

from Benjamin Duval. In his own words, "Where did I go wrong? Was it poor strategy? No! Was it bad luck? No! Was it the misalignment of the planets? (I couldn't see them because the Florida sun was too bright). No, it was none of those things. It was because I forgot to wear my *Empire Deluxe* hat while playing! I demand a rematch!! (Shrill whining) It will be different next time! Dang! I should have worn my Raybands when I looked up at the sky. I'm still seeing a more of tiny suns."

So there it is. Watch for the results of round two, and in the meantime enjoy playing *Empire Deluxe*. **CSW**

Tournament Match-ups Round Two

Name	Network	City, State
R. Rutledge	P	Seattle, WA
M. Isom	P	Bremerton, WA
T. Webb	P	Reno, NV
C. Wright	C	Palos Verdes, CA
M. Kohn	C	Walnut Creek, CA
K. Clark	C	Upland, CA
M. Conder	G	Littleton, CO
J. Longshore	P	Ann Arbor, MI
A. Neal	C	Mason, OH
D. Aldrich	G	Minneapolis, MN
E. Best	G	Carrollton, TX
M. Clouser	G	San Angelo, TX
M. Ellis	P	Tupelo, MS
K. Reimer	G	Radcliff, KY
S. Palmer	C	N. Olmsted, OH
R. Andrews	T	Waterville, OH
D. Eheredge	T	Cockeysville, MD
B. Marchesani	P	Lyndhurst, NJ
D. Crandell	C	NJ
J. Garvey	I	Snyder, NY
B. Brennan	C	College Point, NY
V. Wong	T	Bayside, NY
J. Lesko	C	Linwood, NJ
H. Gale	G	Westwood, MA
M. Gravel	C	Cranston, RI
B. Winslow	G	Lyme, CT
M. Lott	C	Alexandria, VA
W. Haberer	G	Tucson, AZ
D. Hertzler	A	Sarasota, FL
R. Moser	P	FL
R. Matthews	G	Assonet, MA
M. Carroll	C	Rocky Point, NY



Oh, What A Lovely War!

Blue Byte's *History Line 1914-18*



by Robin Matthews

As a military conflict, the First World War evokes terrible pictures of static trench warfare, desperate stalemates, poor leadership and hideous battles of attrition. The "war to end all wars" appears to offer virtually no "attractive" material for any form of strategic or tactical wargame, with perhaps the exception of diplomacy. In fact, the dearth of wargames of any type covering this period tends to prove the point. All credit, then, to Blue Byte for selecting the 1914-18 war as the backdrop for what may well be the first of many *History Line* simulations.

Blue Byte, for those who do not recognize the company, is a German software house that, until recently, has been distributed by UbiSoft. Until this release, *Battle Isle* has probably been their best received title. *Battle Isle* was a hex-based, futuristic wargame with some nice features and an unusual interface. The game engine used for *Battle Isle* has been substantially improved and is now the driving force behind their new release, *History Line 1914-18* (*History Line*).

With *History Line*, they have created a game that is both simple to play and serves as a challenging tactical simulation of warfare, using generic military units loosely based on those that fought during World War I. The four years of that conflict are divided into two-month segments, with each segment constituting a single scenario. Once a scenario is successfully completed, of course, the player moves forward to the next scenario and so, eventually plays through the entire war.

In *History Line*, either one or two players can take part, with the computer providing a very reasonable opponent for the former. The overhead map of the battlefield is divided into two halves, and each player is able to control the forces on his/her side of the screen. The board is not actually marked with hexes, but all movement and combat is calculated using a traditional (but invisible) hex/distance system. Players can choose to play either the German or French side, but as the historical accuracy is very, very relaxed, there is little difference between the opposing armies. In each battle, one side or the other will have set advantages and disadvantages with respect to the other and will have varying geographic or strategic objectives, which basically reduce to either capturing the opponent's HQ or wiping said opponent out.

The emphasis in *History Line* is on playability, so there is no real attempt to re-create the battles of the Somme, Verdun, Cambrai or Jutland. Upon entering the scenarios, each side's forces are already deployed, and the player can concentrate on how and where to use them.

The gaming system operates on classic movement and combat "phases," but because of the split screen and an off set orders system, an illusion is created of almost simultaneous action, to a point. All orders are issued using a mouse driven, point-and-click system, whereby they select the required unit and then point to its target or destination.

Combat is resolved by the computer comparing the many values, loadings and handicaps imposed by terrain, experience, morale, and the other usual influences. The combat is then shown

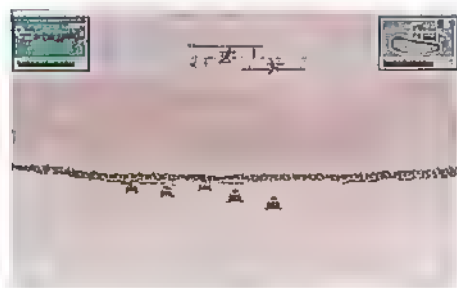


1914-1918

on the screen via a series of animated graphics. Military Units are represented in a generic fashion, so one group of elite infantry look much like another, but there is certainly a difference between, say, the Infantry Units and Armored Cars.

The graphic sequences vary according to the types of units and terrain involved. Each unit is defined by way of Range, Weight, Strength, Armor and, particularly, Fire power against different targets, whether airborne, ground or naval. Infantry, Cavalry, Armored Cars, Sappers, Transports, Supply Trains, Artillery, Anti-tank and Anti-aircraft weapons, loads of different Planes, Balloons, Submarines, Battleships and more are depicted and form a varied and impressive armory.

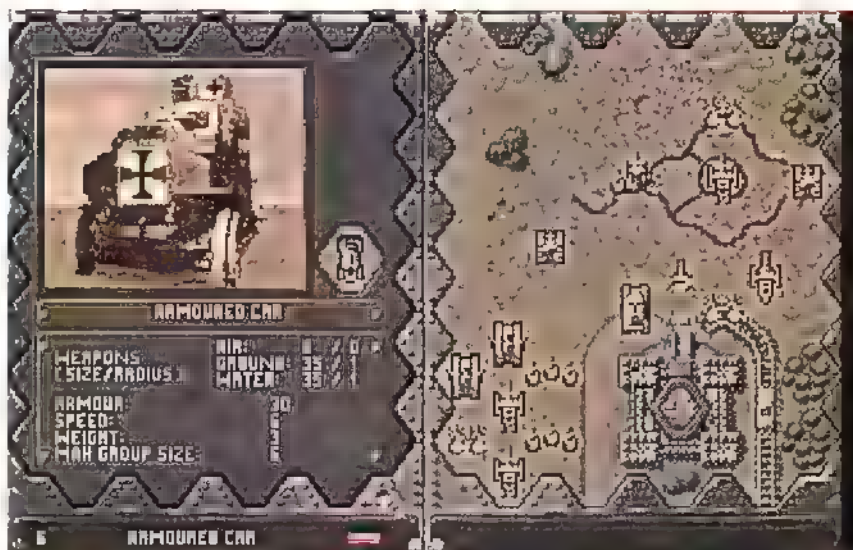
Casualties are portrayed in numbers, and the units take "damage." If they win their conflict, they improve in battle capability, but they can also be destroyed. One quirk of the *History Line* system is that the "stacking" of units is not allowed. This will seem strange to regular wargamers, but is in accord with the general principles of simplicity.



As the war progresses, technological advances in weaponry are reflected by the type of armaments that become available. Planes, armored trains, and tanks all slowly make an appearance, and it is those feelings of "Right, now I can sort those bunkers out" and "When do I get those heavy bombers?" that gives *History Line* a far greater depth than would normally be associated with this lighter type of wargame. In this respect, at least, it resembles *Civilization*. Matters really become impressive when the naval units also come into the fray, amply supported by some of those graphic scenes with big guns blazing and heavy metal flying.

To avoid getting too bogged down in detail and statistics, the military units are inevitably very generic. In fact, it would be fair to say that the entire gaming system could just as easily be applied to any conflict, past present or future. The prospect of this system being used in a Civil War or a Napoleonic setting is intriguing, as is the possibility of high class interplanetary warfare.

Not only are the



military units generic, buildings are also lumped together into one of three types. HQs must be defended/captured at all costs, Depots which are built by specialist units can do some maintenance or repair, and Factories can actually manufacture new units. All these buildings produce the "energy" that is needed to produce and maintain an army.

As the months slip by, the seasons also change. This means that the first time one is faced by a snow-covered landscape, one can almost feel the shivers going down one's spine. The weather greatly

affects movement and the general making of war, and, as in the real thing, it can often defeat both combatants! This attention to the game play detail is what really makes *History Line* and keeps the level of interest and challenge high throughout.

A nice touch is the use of contemporary newspaper clippings between the scenarios.

This reinforces the links with World War I and also serves to meld together the separate scenarios. It is also a wonderful source of WWI trivia as it covers not just the war news, but current sport and social events.



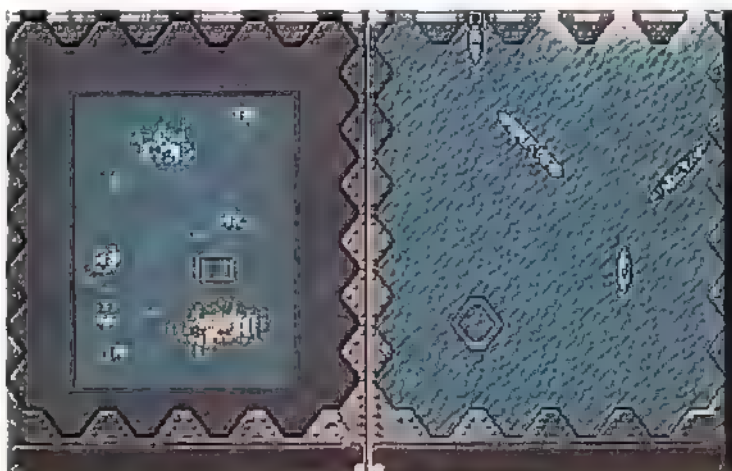
The AI of the computer opponent is of a high standard and each scenario may need to be played several times to work out the best strategy, especially in the later parts of the war when lots of diverse military units interact.

The interface takes a little getting used to, but is then simple and quick to use. Graphics, particularly the animated sequences, are strong, and there is plenty of variety. However, the documentation translation is a bit woolly and could be tidied up with a good tutorial. This is only a minor complaint, for if a player can get through the first battle, he is well on his way to world domination.

History Line is a genuinely unique product that may be dismissed by very serious wargamers, but will be welcomed by a much larger audience. It combines some almost arcade game qualities with depth and detail that will entertain and challenge for many a long evening. This is the best release yet from Blue Byte, and is almost certainly not the last we will see of this innovative wargaming system.

Blue Byte's *History Line 1914-18* is currently available on the IBM from specialist import suppliers. Strategic Plus Software in the UK (tel 0101-81 977-8088, FAX 0101-977-4822,

CompuServe 1000014.3466) is currently able to supply for the equivalent of £ plus postage and handling. **LSW**





Once More into the Breach

Three-Sixty's *V for Victory: Market Garden*

by John Vanore

Even before the echoes of artillery fire have faded from the streets of *Velikiye Luki*, Three-Sixty has released the third title in their successful *V for Victory* line, *Market Garden*. Whereas the previous title's subject may only have been familiar to hardcore wargamers, *Market Garden* has much better name recognition. The subject of countless board games and films, Operation Market Garden was actually two operations, Market and Garden, which encompassed both a massive airborne operation and the XXX Corps' drive to link up with the paratroopers, in order to capture key bridges in The Netherlands. Remarkably, this is only the second computerized treatment of the operation, the first being SSI's 1985 release, *Operation Market Garden*.

Operation Market Garden was a bold con-

borne Division), and an independent Polish airborne brigade were dropped deep inside The Netherlands. Their objective was to seize strategic bridges leading up to and across the Rhine River in advance of a powerful ground drive spearheaded by XXX Corps.

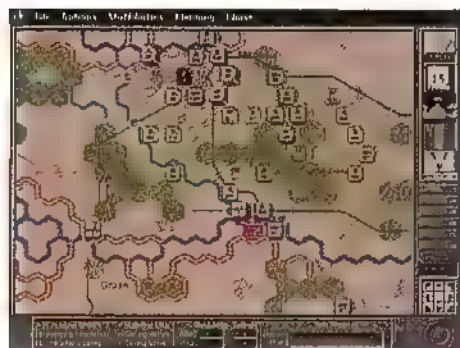
Market Garden recreates this situation in seven progressively more complex scenarios depicting aspects of the airdrop and the XXX Corps attack, united, of course, by the campaign game.

V is for Version 3

What follows will actually be a review with a split personality. On the one hand, I'll be discussing the battles and scenarios of *Market Garden*, which add a new dimension to the *V for Victory* series. On the other hand, we've got version 3.0 (with 3.1 in testing) of the basic *V for Victory* engine. These two tales will be intertwined through the course of my review.

Market Garden will be instantly recognizable to anyone with even a cursory knowledge of previous games in the system. In fact, when it came time to write this review, I had quite a hard time finding the documentation, as I previously had little need for it. There is the familiar battalion-level situation, with a few companies thrown in for good measure. Not surprisingly, game scales remain constant at four hours per turn and one square kilometer per hex. A distinct hex grid underlays the playing area, which can be toggled on or off at the player's discretion. (I suppose it depends on how much you'd rather be playing a board game.) Three-Sixty's superb graphic

presentation and smooth mouse-driven interface are also present, making utmost use of the Macintosh's excellent capabilities in these areas. As with the other *V for Victory* series titles, *Market Garden* is played by consecutive game turns, each broken into several different



cept, which in reality turned out to be a bit *too* bold. In the largest airborne combat drop in history, three divisions (the U.S. 82nd, 101st Airborne Divisions and British 1st Air-



TITLE	V for Victory: Market Garden
PRICE	\$59.99
SYSTEMS	IBM, Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS	IBM (386SX or better, 512K VESA compatible video card, 3MB RAM mouse), Mac (System 6.0.X or higher, 2.5 MB RAM, 4MB hard drive space)
PLAYERS	1 or 2 via modem
PROTECTION	None
DESIGNERS	Larry Merkel, Ed Rams, Eric Young, Keith Zabalaoui
PUBLISHER	Three-Sixty Pacific Campbell, CA 409/776-2187

phases: Planning, Execution, and After Action.

In the Planning Phase, the player issues commands to all available forces, both on map and off. Besides designating ground force attacks and artillery barrages, air strikes are also an option using medium bombers and fighter-bombers. I say "option," but one shouldn't take that too literally; air strikes constitute one of the easiest and most effective ways to soften up a panzer battalion before hitting it with ground troops, and the player who doesn't cycle through this side of the command bar is unnecessarily handicapping his troops.

Also during Planning, more explicit orders can be given. For instance, three defensive levels can be used, depending on how badly one wants to hold a particular piece of terrain. Those options are Retreat If Attacked, Defend If Attacked or Defend At All Costs. Likewise, four different levels of effort can be specified for attacks: All-Out Assault, Assault (the default selection), Assault with No Advance or Probe. The immediate implications of these choices are obvious. Perhaps not so obvious is that the more strenuous options—All-Out Assault and Defend At All Costs—require high morale levels in order to be carried off successfully and carry the potential for much higher casualties in a failed effort.

All of the commands issued during the Planning Phase are put into operation during the Execution Phase. The Planning Phase is particularly important because, once play moves to Execution, the player can only sit back and watch as his scheme is implemented. In the spirit of the old *Simulations Canada* games, the player is powerless to intercede once the tanks start rolling. One can only hope that his proper prior planning will prevent piss-poor performance. As the Execution Phase moves along, each battle is resolved, and an appropriate flag appears over each affected hex (Stars & Stripes, Union Jack or Swastika) to give a quick "heads-up" on the result of the combat.



The After Action Phase is also self-explanatory. During this phase, the player can click through each hex where any sort of combat took place and get either a brief or detailed report of the combat. In the case of a ground attack, the briefing will provide a qualitative



description of both sides' performance (excellent, good, fair, or poor), casualties as a percentage of forces, and the number of units eliminated. If an artillery interdiction barrage was fired into the hex, the player will be apprised of how long movement through that hex was delayed.

Operation Game Mechanics

Market Garden retains the familiar and very satisfying features that made *Utah Beach* and *Velikiye Luki* such versatile products. Two elements familiar to veteran wargamers are options and variants. Each specific option or variant has an effect on one player or another, and can be used alone or in combination to handicap a player (or the computer), to alter play balance, or to explore certain "What If?" scenarios.

By options, I refer to such items as Fog of War, Limited Intelligence and Variable Weather. Fog of War limits the amount of information each player has regarding his own forces and reflects the fact that reports don't always get back to headquarters from the front lines. Limited Intelligence, on the other hand, restricts knowledge of enemy force strengths, capabilities, and even locations (until contact is made). Variable Weather can screw everything up. By restricting air sortie generation, it can adversely affect both offensive air missions and, in this case, air drops of reinforcements!

Variants concern historically valid possibilities that could have affected the battle in question. What if the German 9th Panzer was present in its entirety during the battle? The player can give the Germans some extra forces if he feels he's winning too easily as the Allies. (Remember, this was the offensive that gave us *A Bridge Too Far*.)

In a feature now standard for the *V for Victory* series, we find the map area surrounded by the basic Mac menu on top, a Command Box at the right, and the Unit Window along the bottom of the screen. The Command Box gives the player the where-withal to manipulate supply levels, assign units among the various headquarters echelons available, allocate air strikes (my personal favorite), and estimate combat odds calculations before combat kicks off. And, yes, one can scrub an attack by clicking on a button in

this Command Box if one decides the odds aren't adequate to ensure success.

Move down to the Unit Window to see information on whichever unit or stack is selected with the mouse. The information display looks like the data presented on a cardboard unit counter. The player can see the entire spectrum of values for any unit as long as Fog of War and Limited Intelligence are toggled off. To increase the level of difficulty (or uncertainty), one can toggle these options on, and all that can be seen is a string of question marks. I find this window particularly helpful in checking up on fatigue states. My experience has been that, all things being equal, high fatigue will kill off units much faster than any other factor.

Operation Seven Scenarios

Market Garden features seven scenarios covering various aspects of the campaign. These run the gamut from one-hour-long introductory scenarios to the Campaign Scenario entitled, you guessed it, "A Bridge Too Far." Although the shorter scenarios are intended for beginners, I find them useful for getting a quick fix on the system when I don't have the time for "Destruction of the 1st," a ten-hour slugfest with a depressing title which portends the battering of the British 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem. Other scenarios are dedicated to other formations, such as "Breakout of 30th Corps," showing the armoured thrust intended to relieve the paras (pardon the Brit speak), "Screaming Eagles," or "Groesbeek Heights," featuring the landing and objectives of the Amos 'n' Andy Division (which is what the "AA" on the 82nd Airborne Division's patch really stands for).



Operation Patsy Panzers

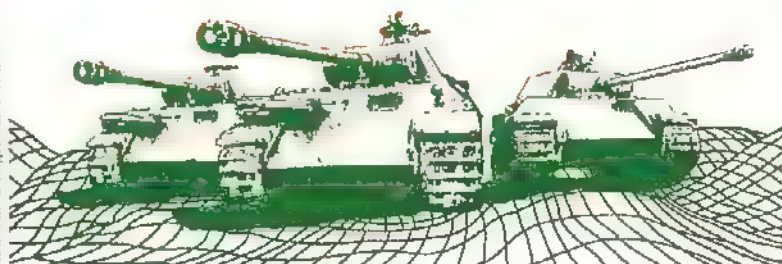
As was the case with *Velikiye Luki*, all is not perfect with *Market Garden*. One significant problem persists with this latest iteration of *V for Victory*. The Artificial Intelligence algorithms used by the computer to control its forces still leave much to be desired. In fact, the computer German in *Market Garden* seems even more spineless than its counterparts in earlier iterations of the series. I am constantly amazed by the reticence of the digital panzertruppen to take on a battalion of paratroopers, the quintessential light infantry. I've intentionally played many of these

scenarios with the "Fog of War" and "Limited Intelligence" options turned off, so I presume the computer is as all-knowing as I am regarding enemy force dispositions. Yet my Screaming Eagles keep on grabbing turf, digging in, and running up the victory point tally.

The Allies have to achieve some very well-defined territorial objectives in order to win, so I suspect the computer has a better time at identifying and going after these objectives. (I say "suspect" because I'll never be satisfied I've done a definitive test of all the options and possibilities to cover all the bases.) The most satisfying way to get in a good (and challenging) game may be to play as the Germans and let the computer handle the Allies. That way, one is more likely to see the Rhinelanders put up a spirited defense against air landings and simultaneous advances of armored columns.

There is also a weak spot in the documentation. Although it does an excellent job of describing all the game features and functions, it has almost *no* historical notes. Although this omission is not so great a problem with *Market Garden* as it was with *Velikiye Luki*, most wargamers nonetheless enjoy a block of historical background and narrative

Illustration © Koguy Mar (m)



with their games. Granted, there are a few pages up front discussing the various forces portrayed in the battles, and a bit of history trickles down throughout the reference book. However, a serious wargame needs more than this.

Now, on to the Battleset concept. It appears that Three-Sixty has finally cleared this one up with software release 3.0. With the release of *Market Garden*, we now have three sets of scenarios that can be played using the same basic software application (*Market Garden*, *Velikiye Luki*, and the newly-revised *Utah Beach*). However, Three-Sixty keeps on trying to improve the basic software engine of the *V for Victory* series. While this is generally laudable, it will continue to raise the spectre of compatibility problems between newer applications and older scenario sets.

A case in point is version 3.1 of the software,

which fixes a few of the bugs encountered in 3.0. Now, engineers will not disappear from the map after conducting a bridging operation; also, units can recover from an out-of-supply status by re-establishing supply lines to respective headquarters. Ferries also function in accordance with the reference manual.

Granted, these are small fixes that should not impair com-

patibility, but they are indicative of Three-Sixty's efforts to keep on top of the software. Right now, everything works fine. Whether or not we'll have compatibility problems when *Gold-Juno-Sword* (the next title in the series) is released, only time will tell.

Operation Concluding Remarks

In my opinion, the *V for Victory* series has finally come of age with the release of *Market Garden*. Version 3.0 of the system software essentially brings the original Battleset concept to fruition, even though Three-Sixty has officially dropped that concept. Also, the eventual addition of the modem play option should do much to overcome the wimpy computer opponent. *V for Victory* is a good, fun system that really feels like a wargame and provides a great deal of bang for the buck.

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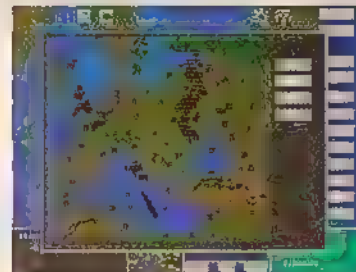
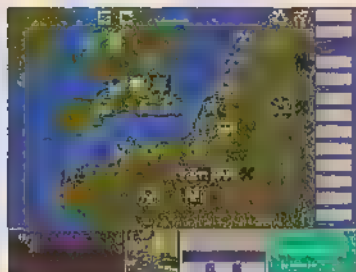
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Peace Through Strength (Lots of it)

Changeling Software's *Pax Imperia*

by Douglas Winship

"This is great, but I wish I could do this..." and "Hmmm, this really should be more developed..." and "That's not realistic..."

These are the sorts of things that game players say as they enjoy the games in a favorite genre. The people at Changeling Software clearly said an awful lot of things like that while playing *Reach For the Stars* and *Spaceward Ho*—and *Pax Imperia* is the result. The one sentence description of the play of the game is the same as for its predecessors: Explore the galaxy, colonize other worlds, and deal harshly with any alien scum who get in your way. What makes *Pax Imperia* worth adding to the collection is all the new things involved in accomplishing traditional goals.



Pax Imperia can be played by up to 16 human or computer players. The current version is for single machine play, but Appletalk network and remote support will soon be available. The game may be played in a turn-by-turn mode or in continuous real time. With more than one player at a single machine, turn mode is required. The real time mode is more entertaining, but events can boil over on players in a big hurry.

At the start of the game, players choose the species they wish to play, or they can design one from scratch. Racial characteristics determine which planets will be most valuable for colonization and exploitation. They also affect population growth rates, research efficiency, militaristic ability and the potential

for social unrest. Players then select the empire's six Ministers. Good Ministers keep their departments functioning well, bad Ministers leave them functioning poorly. If Ministers are chosen well to begin with, there is no reason to replace them later, unless they are bribed or assassinated by an opponent. Finally, players choose what region of the galaxy to play in and select up to 50 stars to play with on the star map. A good number to choose is around seven to ten stars. This may not seem like many, but each star will have on average seven planets, each with up to three moons, and every planet and moon is potentially colonizable! This is a tremendous amount of geography to contend with. A 50 star game with only two or three empires will take hours of play just to achieve first contact, and days to complete.

Once a game begins, players have a number of information and map screens to navigate between. There are four maps: a Star Map of the entire play area; System Maps showing the currently selected star and its planets; Planetary Maps showing the selected planet and its moons; and a Surface Map which shows the natural resources of the world, along with whatever infrastructure has been built there. There are also a variety of other useful control screens.

Players explore other star systems, then colonize the rich or environmentally suitable planets or moons they find. They then, as cash and population resources allow, build infrastructure: Factories for extracting raw materials and manufacturing ship components; Cities for increasing the tax base; Shipyards for assembling starships; Bases for defending against space attacks; and Ports. When a Colony builds a Port, it becomes a Home World, which then begins to produce tax revenue instead of consuming it. Home World population growth is dramatically lower than Colonial, however. Any world can become profitable eventually, but planets or moons which have the right atmosphere and temperature for the player's chosen race will do

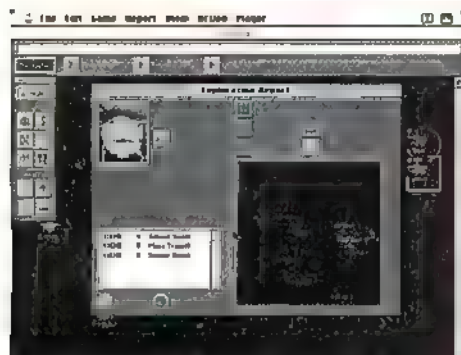


so faster than planets that are missing one or the other, or both.

Beyond exploration, the other major activity is designing, building, dispatching and fighting ships. There are essentially four kinds of ship: Scouts, Transports, Fighters and Tenders. The Tenders are an innovation in *Pax Imperia*. One must have a Tender to repair damaged ships. Even ships in home systems must be repaired by a Tender. Another differ-



TITLE:	<i>Pax Imperia: The Galactic Empire Simulator</i>
PRICE:	\$69.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS:	System 6.0.7 or better, 1MB RAM (2 for color)
# OF PLAYERS:	Up to 16
PROFECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Pete Sispoid s, Andrew Sispoidis, and Jeanine DeSocio
PUBLISHER:	Changeling Software Windsor Locks, CT (203) 623-1963



ence between *Pax Imperia* and its predecessors is that building a transport is not very expensive in terms of cash and resources, but filling a large transport will consume at least 50% of the entire population of the planet that built it. There is a good selection of canned ship designs, each of which becomes available as one's tech level reaches an appropriate level. Players may also design custom ships and even custom ship components. As technology advances, older ship designs become less expensive but much less effective.

Another nice innovation in *Pax Imperia* is the way ships move between systems. Instead of hyperspace, where all ships are invisible and out of communication, ships in *Pax Imperia* travel on the star map, where they can be seen. They can be redirected or recalled in mid-travel, and if their range is low enough and sensors good enough, ships can see the ships of other empires passing by in deep space, and even intercept them. There is no range limitation on ships, other than the probability that a slow ship traveling very far will likely be obsolete by the time it arrives.

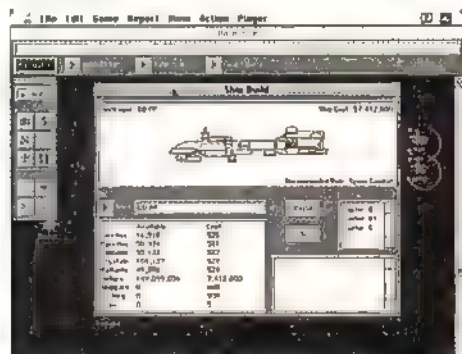
The space combat portion of the game is also pleasing. Instead of a dry report detailing results, *Pax Imperia* allows the players to actually fight the battles. A map is displayed which shows all the combatant fleets, with the range and effectiveness of each fleet's weapons and ECM/ECCM shown as circles. The players can determine targets and move their ships. In most small head-to-head battles there is little that the player can do to significantly affect the outcome, but in larger fleet battles the player can have an impact. Also, the battle module allows outmatched fleets the possibility of retreat. Realistically, the battle module could be dropped from the game without seriously affecting a player's chances of winning or losing, but its presence means a lot in terms of enjoyment. If I am going to lose a fleet that I have spent a lot of time and effort building, I want to have the pleasure of seeing it get shot up, instead of just getting a message like "Fleet 8 lost a battle at Sirius, all 287 Battleships were destroyed. The enemy lost 1 out of 3 ships."

There is Space-to-Ground and Ground-to-Ground combat as well. Space-to-Ground combat consists of eliminating the planet's defenses, then either bombing its populace into the stone age, or landing a transport to

kill everyone off and take over. Ground combat takes place on larger planets that have been colonized by more than one race. As one colony or another grows too big to support itself, excess population will migrate into other areas of the planet. If there is enough of this migrating population, it can overwhelm its neighbors. Players can influence these Migration Wars by landing additional troops to start a migration of their own or by strafing the migrating hordes from space.

While all this colonization, building and fighting is going on, the player must also keep a sharp eye on the mechanics of the empire's economy. Taxes must be adjusted, depending upon the empire's needs. High taxes bring in a lot of cash, but hurt the economy. A fractious race may even riot if taxes are set too high. Players must also decide how much cash to set aside for research. Too little research leaves players with low tech ships that get wiped out easily, while too much research leaves the economy crippled and unable to build expensive high tech ships. Players also allocate money to ship maintenance, colonial development, and social spending on Home Worlds. Raising colonial spending increases population growth on Colonies. Raising social spending lowers population growth on Home Worlds, but raises the efficiency of those worlds. Efficiency is the rate at which worlds mine resources and build ships. It also affects the cost of infrastructure.

One last important budget item is espionage. Once a player makes contact with an alien race, the Espionage Minister comes into play. Through him or her, players can steal alien technology, bribe alien ministers, or even assassinate them. Players must also allocate a continuing budget to counter-espionage, to prevent the same things from happening to them.



The difference between galactic success and failure lies in a delicate balancing act between Growth, Assets and Efficiency. Too much growth limits efficiency, drawing out too much cash from the economy limits growth, and encouraging very high efficiency prevents assembling the assets needed to use it. As the game progresses, players must adjust their emphasis continuously as their situation changes.

Winning is simple, though not easy! — just be the last empire in existence. Empires tend

to be very spread out and are often intermingled. Death blows do not come easy. While players are clearing out one sector of space, making it free of alien infestation, the aliens will be starting new colonies in others systems, reclaiming destroyed worlds, or cleaning out sectors of their own space, making it free of player infestation. In the early game, ships are simply too slow to prevent this situation. Later, as ships become faster and are equipped with better sensors, it becomes easier to cordon off the enemy. Then players must be careful with resources which suddenly and alarmingly become quite scarce. If all goes well, the player wins. Too many mistakes, and there is always "New Game."



Pax Imperia has the feel of a work in progress. The manual is out of date and will soon be reprinted. A very good supplement is provided on disk for the time being. There are also a few minor bugs in the game, which are annoying rather than fatal. The main problem is with the star map, which does not zoom in or out effectively. Also, ships in transit through deep space sometimes leave ghosts or erase what they cross over. There are also occasional problems with changing the destination of ships traveling through deep space. All of these annoyances appear to have a common root and are supposed to be fixed shortly.

The interface is attractive and entertaining, with good graphics, digitized voices, and some neat music that fits the flavor of the game well. It does lack polish, however. A little more animation would be nice, for instance. Also the controls are best suited for playing the game in turn mode, but when playing solo, the game plays best in real time mode. There are simply so many windows to move between that events can run away from players at higher real-time speeds.

On the grand cosmic gaming scale, the quality of *Pax Imperia* more than outweighs its blemishes. The interface takes a little longer to get used to than it might, but ends up being quite serviceable. The important thing is that the game system itself is rich and deep. Each game takes a long time to play and is totally engaging throughout. For those who like monstrous, involved strategy games, especially space-based ones, *Pax Imperia* is a pleasing and challenging addition to its genre. **CGW**

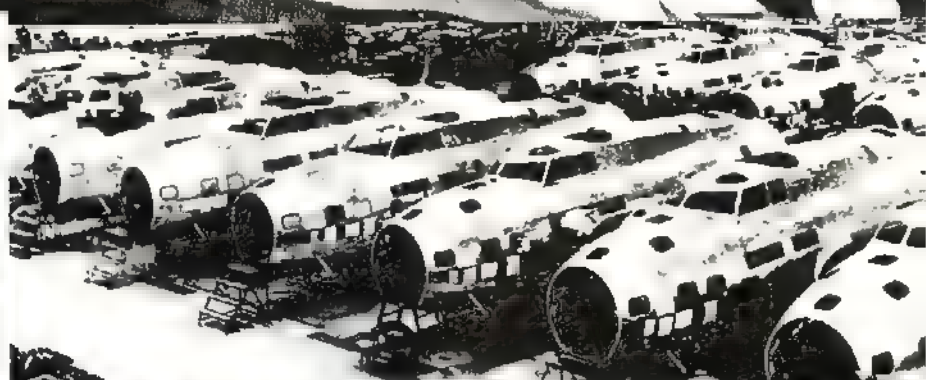


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A Clash Of Cymbals

Clash of Steel Plays the 1939 Overture with Cannon

by Alan Emrich

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Those who have enjoyed Mel Brooks' classic comedy, *The Producers*, will remember the outlandish title song from the play, "Springtime for Hitler." Wargamers may again be hearing that chorus when they consider the three major releases for the IBM that will soon cover WWII in Europe, each on a similar grand strategic scale. While *Three-Sixty's High Command* and Avalon Hill's *Third Reich* are probably well known to our readers, SSI's *Clash of Steel* from newcomer Martin Scholtz may take gamers by surprise.

Like the war in Europe, this game originates from Germany (where, ironically, national censorship would once have prevented its sale), and Mr. Scholtz' Germanic perspective on the subject adds some delightful nuances to the game. His perspective is clearly one of a wargamer/history buff who enjoys a good, clean, playable game.

A Gathering of Generals

Clash of Steel has that same kind of wonderful addictive gaming quality to it that I have found in such titles as *Warlords*, *Empire Deluxe*, *Command HQ* and the *V for Victory* series. To make sure that my impressions were correct, I invited a few of my wargaming buddies over to see and play it. Well, when I had to shoo them out at 3:30 AM because they couldn't stop playing, I knew the game was a winner. Now to explain why we're all playing this wargame, laughing, having a good time, and singing the "Naughty Nazi" numbers from Mel Brooks' *To Be or Not To Be*....

Hitler Lite

Clash of Steel is best summed up as "High Command Lite." It is a far less serious study of the European Theater of Operations (and, thus, is "less filling"), but it maintains an ease of play and quick tempo that makes the hours

whiz by (so it "tastes great"). It is a simple, strategic wargame that manages to touch on all the major aspects of the war and yet never gets itself too dirty in the details. In that regard, it is much like the ever popular board wargame, *The Russian Campaign* — clean, comprehensive and well-designed.

Clash of Steel is similar to a lot of boardgames, most notably *Australian Design Group's World in Flames*. The resemblance to that game is particularly strong because *Clash of Steel* uses bimonthly turns, each consisting of several "pulses," during which one side conducts its movement and combat. How



many pulses will be played during a single turn and who will go first each turn are both mysteries (determined by die rolls), but the winter months tend to be very short, while the summer turns of May/June and July/August I've seen drag out as many as 11 impulses. The turn/impulse system gives *Clash of Steel* a lot of charm. The real beauty, though, is that the player with the initiative might not only go first, but also last during a game turn that has an odd number of impulses. Not only that, but if that player also has the initiative next turn (although moving last in the previous turn lowers one's chances of that happening), he might get a "double move" opportunity to attack the other player before he can react!

Rock 'em, Sock 'em, Kick 'em in the Corps

The units of maneuver in *Clash of Steel* are corps, armies, air fleets and capital ships. The land unit mix also includes paratroop corps (which don't "drop" but can influence one

attack made nearby each turn), artificial harbor units (handy for invasions), and the all important Army Group/Front formations. These latter units, also known as "headquarters" among my gaming group, are not only a player's strongest pieces, but they also extend one's supply lines beyond friendly cities. Thus, they are the American Express card of this game — one shouldn't wage war without them.

Another charming element in *Clash of Steel* is the naming of many of the pieces. Oh, sure, the ships are all named, but the really cool part is that many of the land units are named as well. Headquarters with names like Zhukov, Montgomery, Alexander, Eisenhower, Bradley and DeGaulle for the Allies, and Rundstedt, Bock, Manstein, Rommel, Kesselring and Garibaldi for the Axis, give an enjoyable element of history to the game. Even the armored units are named after some of the war's more celebrated generals such as Patton, Kleist, Hoepner and Manteuffel.

As for getting these boys around, we found the movement and combat systems to be so natural and the interface so intuitive, that we figured out most of the game mechanics during our first game without any documentation to guide us. Just plunking down in front of the computer and "pushing the pieces around" was all it took to overrun a few countries and wage a little strategic warfare. As jaded, mega-manual-reading wargamers, this was a delightfully refreshing change of pace.

The land units maneuver around using regular, hex-by-hex movement. Alternately, on each player's first impulse of a game turn, each nationality can move one to three pieces by strategic movement (simply teleporting them to any connected friendly city). A different type of movement, called "operational redeployment," allows a player to move one unit in a ten square jump. This can be used to "force march" infantry in order to keep up with the tanks, or to quickly shift air forces to needed sectors of the front.

Units pay a single movement point to enter most hexes, with mountains and swamps costing two. Moving directly from one enemy "zone of control" to another costs one additional movement point. With most move-

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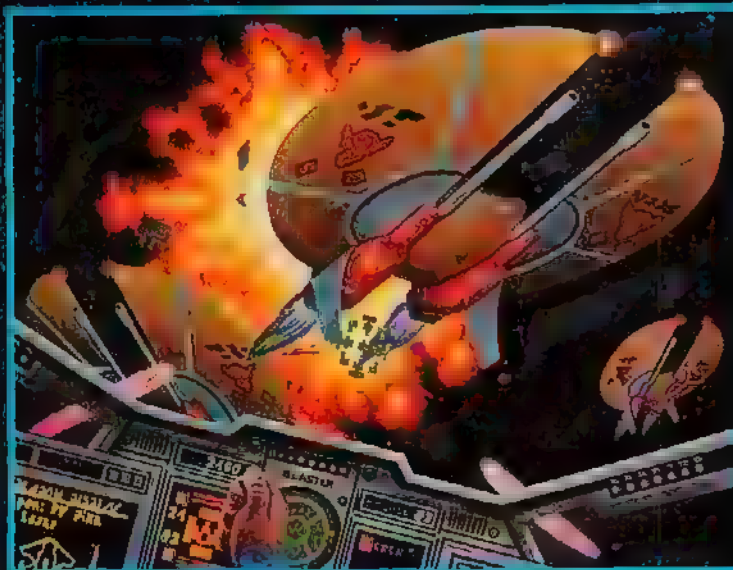
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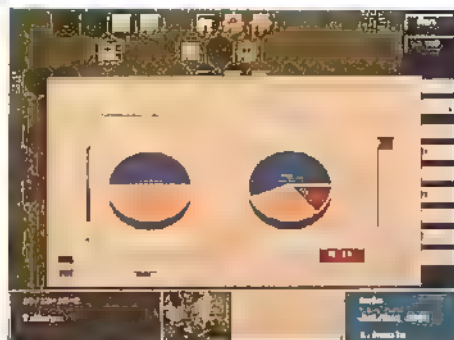
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ment allowances in the two, three and four hex range (for headquarters, armies and corps, respectively), there can be some useful infiltration of weak lines, as well as viable screening and delay tactics for players on the retreat. Tanks move at speeds of four for the Russians, five for the Allies, and six or seven for the Germans.

The trick with movement is to cut off enemy forces before smashing them in combat. When units are eliminated while isolated, they can only be rebuilt after a year's wait and their full price must be paid. Other eliminated units are bought back cheap with a 60% discount and reappear on the next turn. Thus, a good strategy is to have armor units push forward and create pockets for the infantry to mop up.

"Hold 'Em by the Nose and Kick 'Em in the Butt"

Land combat is a function of movement. At any point, an enemy unit can be selected as the target of strikes (from friendly airplanes or shore bombardment from friendly ships) and assaults. Assaulting an enemy position allows multiple units to attack an enemy unit in concert. Each friendly unit can only participate in one friendly assault per turn, however, so keeping fresh troops around so that a single stronghold (like Leningrad, Gibraltar, or just about any other city) can be hit with multiple strikes and assaults in a single im-



pulse, is a viable and important tactic for capturing them.

The other form of combat is simply trying to move one's units into an enemy-occupied hex. These "overrun attacks" are conducted by individual units, though with a penalty to the attacker's actual combat strength. Often, assaults slap the enemy line around, causing strength losses and retreats, while overrun attacks charge after the weakened defenders and finish them off.

The War at Sea

The naval system in *Clash of Steel* is very much like the Avalon Hill boardgame *War at Sea*. Each ship has two ratings: one for naval combat and the other for the interdiction of enemy supply, or its "raider value." Combat values range from two, for the Russian *October Revolution* and a German U-boat, to

three, for the British carrier *Glorious*, and up to five for the *Bismarck* and Ohio-class battle-ships. When a naval action occurs, it will usually be an air-to-sea battle with only carriers, submarines, and land based airplanes having a chance to roll some dice. In any event, if a ship rolls less than or equal to its rating, an enemy ship takes a "ding." Two such hits and a ship is sunk. Damaged ships can be brought back to port (assuming they survive the battle) and have a 1/3 chance each turn of being repaired.

"A Slice of Turkey, A Drop of Greece"

Politics has even been woven into *Clash of Steel*, although exactly how the machinations work behind the numbers is far more opaque than the breezy land, sea and air systems in the game. At any time, one can spend some of his political capital in an effort to "press" another country into joining his alliance. Each neutral is rated for their ability to resist such pressure. There is even a Balkan Pact wherein Greece, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia stand united against foreign pressures. Hungary and Bulgaria might also join this pact, if pressured.

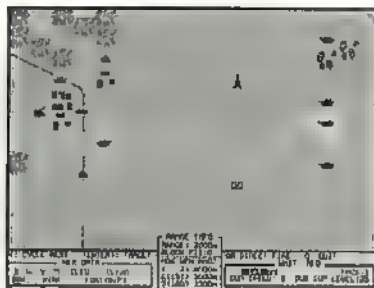
One odd thing about this pact is that I often would attack Yugoslavia as the Germans only to find Turkey so happy about it that it joined my side outright. Again, there is more to the diplomatic options than meets the eye, and

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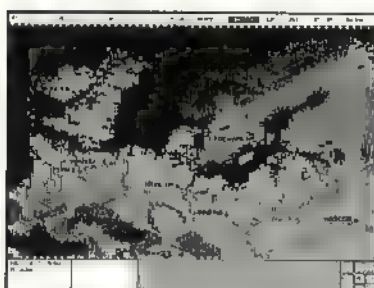
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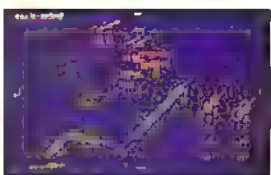
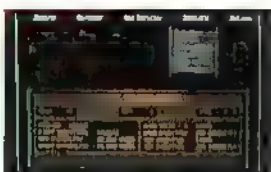
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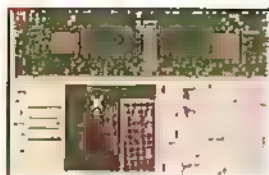
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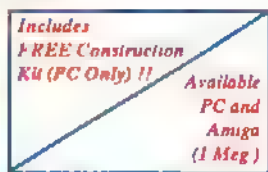
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some of the results have been surprising. I've seen Russia declare preemptive war on the Germans (thus keeping Rumania and Hungary from becoming German allies) on the same turn that America entered the war. There is so much variation in the diplomatic circles of *Clash of Steel* that it almost excludes coming up with a "perfect plan." Seldom have I seen the political situation break the same between any two games played.

Besides politics, a good number of strategic and operational elements have found their way into *Clash of Steel* — each an example of simplicity in itself. Strategically, bomber campaigns can be waged by both sides. One selects the target (either enemy factories, harbors or oil) and it's bombs away! Each hit on a factory permanently increases the cost to produce a land unit by a single point (they initially range from around 10-25 points each to build) while hitting harbors increases the cost of ships. Targeting oil is supposed to reduce the speed of enemy units, although I've yet to see it work with any particular effect in the beta copy previewed.

Operationally, *Clash of Steel* allows players to construct an engineer unit whose task is to build fortifications. These forts are real bears to capture, and make invasions against them (even if unoccupied) risky at best. At specific times in the game, the Russians will learn low level infiltration tactics and the Germans mobile defense and kampgruppe techniques, each of which modifies the strength and results of land battles when they occur.

Don't Douse the Edisons!

Research & Development also has a place in *Clash of Steel*. Players can work on such discoveries as multiple rocket launchers (which, when fully developed, allow for special preparatory bombardment on some attacks), panzerfaust, anti-aircraft radar, improved anti-submarine warfare, strategic rockets, jet aircraft, anti-tank guns and heavy armor. Each of these has a specific game effect and has an important influence on the game.

The economics are incredibly simple. Players earn one point per friendly controlled city and two per resource hex. Added to this are any convoys that make it past the enemy navy at sea. From this total an amount is subtracted

to bring all depleted units up to full strength, while the remainder is available for the purchase of new or previously eliminated units. Such purchased units take a certain number of turns before they appear and, when placed, pop up in or adjacent to friendly controlled cities. Fortunately, there are more units available (and being added to each side's force pool) than one can hope to build, so there are always plenty of strategic choices to be made when considering a production strategy.

When the first draft copy of the documentation finally arrived, it was slightly better than the typical SSI wargame documentation. Because *Clash of Steel* is a "kinder, gentler" wargame, the tables and formulae provided were particularly informative, and the important game concepts were clearly laid out (save for the mysteries of politics). When finally completed, they will have the game well covered, I expect.

Wargaming in Stereo

Even my 7-year-old son's interest was piqued by *Clash of Steel*, especially after hearing the game's raucous sound effects. Hon-



estly, it's like having the battle soundtrack from a Hollywood movie playing in the background: the bullets whizzing past one's ear, the roar of tank engines, and the whine of dive bombers all punctuate game play. While it might drive a gamer to distraction over time, it is a pretty neat "Hey, check this out" feature to impress others with.

Better still is the plethora of strategic game options in *Clash of Steel*. Each game the Germans will randomly choose from one of three major strategic plans which will kick in after the fall of France. These are to either invade England, Spain or Russia. Computer player handicaps can be modified, the Allies can be given random "extra strength" units, Japan could attack Russia, Hitler's "no retreat" orders could be implemented, the Axis might receive "liberated legions" from conquered cities, chaos could strike the German high command, and more. The entire tempo of the game can be dramatically altered by simply applying different options when next played.

"Hey, This Computer Cheats!"

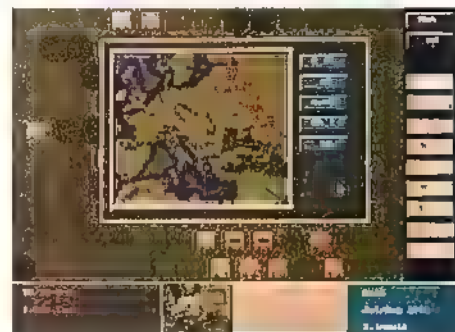
Yes, the computer wargamer's constant irritant — computers clearly cheating just to keep up with their human counterparts — may be found in *Clash of Steel*. The early versions of *Clash of Steel* featured some computer player "gimmies," which were also spelled out in the manual (so it's safe to assume they will be a part of the final game). Frankly, I wasn't that perturbed about it — particularly since it was very clear how I was being cheated. Sure, the computer players can make strategic redeployments on any impulse when I can only do them on the first one. I can live with that. Besides, a smart human player can still triumph, and it's possible to have so much fun that the computer's cheating simply doesn't matter (well...much). Still, this will bother some wargamers and could detract from their enjoyment of the game.

Some might hope for relief by playing with other human players, but the only multiplayer options to be found were to have players "hot seat" in front of a single computer.

There is no plan for modem or network play in the finished version of *Clash of Steel*. Also, in the beta version previewed, one could not split up the Allies and just play either Russia or The West. The victory conditions, too, were as subtle as a sledgehammer. The Allies must crush Germany and Italy by the historical date of May/June 1945, or the Axis must defeat both Russia and England by that time. Any other case is a draw.

Heil, Baby!

The drugged out hippie character, named LSD, who played Hitler in the aforementioned "Springtime for Hitler" often said, "Heil, baby!" That's enough to make any serious wargamer smile, but it is even better when wargamers are entertained as well as smiling. *Clash of Steel* is a "First Clash" piece of wargaming entertainment software. I didn't learn anything new, but enjoyed a rollicking good time using what I already knew from 20 years in wargaming. Crank up the panzers, boys! We'll be in Moscow before you can say "FrankenFurher." (Somebody pass the chips, please.) **CSW**



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MISSION CONTROL

Winning Falcon 3.0 Campaigns

by Thomas H. Smith, Jr. and Robert A. Smith

Illustration by [illegible]

An admitted sim maniac, Tom is fortunate in that he has a viable excuse for his many hours in digital cockpits: he is the co-author of *Falcon 3.0: The Complete Handbook* and *Dynamix Great Warplanes: The Ultimate Strategy Guide*.

F*alcon 3.0* campaigns are incredibly detailed and can be quite intimidating. Promoting you to the Commanding Officer (CO), *Falcon 3.0* campaigns require you to personally lead your squadron to victory by allocating the limited resources available in the most effective manner. This means allocating sufficient aircraft, equipping them with appropriate weapons, defining the most effective flight paths, and assigning the pilots best suited for that particular mission. To do this, a player must first understand the internal workings of campaigns and how the computer-controlled enemy fights.

Internal Workings

Each theater is divided into strategic points called nodes. Each red and blue square on the campaign map represents a node. A node can be any site of strategic importance, including bridges, airfields and radar installations. At the start of the campaign, the computer decides a high-level strategy for each side, and determines a set of nodes that must be controlled in order to achieve a victory. To win the war, your forces must conquer the predetermined victory nodes while denying the enemy access to his victory nodes. Ownership of nodes are checked at the beginning of each day and reported during the "Theater Briefing."

Each node has a type and is assigned capacities for holding and regenerating military units. Some common node types are Military Airfield, Bridge, City, Radar Site and Army Base. Units at nodes include air defenses, ground forces, and aircraft. For example in a Kuwaiti campaign, Karbala Industrial Cen-

ter, an Industrial Target, can contain up to 10 units, has three AAA units, no SAM units and cannot create new units.

The status of nodes is independent of the status of units at the node. Overall, operational status of a node is less important than ownership of the node. For example, take a bridge. Any modern military can lay and repair bridges across most rivers, yet you may still be assigned to attack a bridge. Successfully destroying the assigned bridge will result in a successful mission, but will not effect the long-term usage of the bridge. Destroying a bridge that has not been assigned will have absolutely no impact on the outcome of the campaign. Unlike nodes, when a unit is destroyed, it stays dead for the remainder of the war. If, while enroute to the assigned bridge, your forces attack and destroy SAM units at a nearby Chemical Weapons node, those SAMs will be gone forever and subsequent attacks on that node will not have to contend with them.

The most vital resource your army has is your squadron. Although other friendly aircraft are performing missions and friendly forces are engaging enemy forces, your squadron is considered the elite, war-winning element. The success rate of your squadron sets the moral of the entire theater. Out of the four missions you will be assigned each day, when you successfully complete three or more, friendly forces will benefit greatly from your successes and advance against the enemy. If your squadron successfully completes only two missions on a given day, advances by friendly forces will slow and few, if any, enemy nodes will be captured. Complete zero or one mission per day and enemy forces will benefit from your failures and capture nodes from friendly forces. Maintain three successes per day and your army is headed for victory!

Tools of the Trade

How does one learn the details about nodes?

There are many utilities written by *Falcon 3.0* players, two of which are designed to make your job as squadron CO much easier. These utilities are primarily available in the Modern Air Combat library of CompuServe's FSFORUM, the message forum dedicated to flight simulation software. *Falccalc* by Bill White is your simulated friend in the intelligence community. Among other things, *Falccalc* lists the victory nodes for each side in the campaign, the current status of every node in the theater including the quantity and types of units at each node, and gives tactical intelligence on each mission including waypoint information of enemy flights. *Falccalc* is your substitute for satellite photos and recon aircraft.

Falcnr by Rob Heitman is a roster and weapons supply editor. Using *Falcnr* you can edit any attribute for any pilot, change pilot's ranks, revive MIA, KIA and court martialled pilots, and edit the number of pilots, aircraft, and weapons stores available during your campaign. With *Falcnr* and *Falccalc* you have the same control over your squadron and access to intelligence reports that real-world mission planners have.

Rules for Designing Attacks

As mentioned, your army depends primarily on your squadron's mission success rate. Your squadron's success rate depends entirely on your leadership abilities. The following guidelines will help maximize your mission success rate.

- The first rule of mission planning is to never cut corners.

Always take sufficient time to thoroughly investigate your mission, the targets, and the ingress (approach) and egress (departure) routes. Note the location and proximity of enemy airbases; if there's an enemy airbase nearby, you can count on encountering enemy aircraft. Check for surface-to-air threats

near the flight route and at the target. If you have *Falccalc*, use it to analyze the enemy nodes you will be flying near or over and determine exactly how many surface-to-air units are present, and use *Falcon 3.0's* own "recon" feature to view the position of the units.

- The second rule is to always assume the number of aircraft *Falcon 3.0* orders you to use is the minimum number of aircraft required to complete the mission.

If *Falcon 3.0* orders you to lead a flight of four F-16s on a defensive screen, you can bet you're going to need more than four aircraft to complete the mission safely. You may only assign a maximum of eight F-16s per mission, sometimes less. Unless you are low on fuel or out of weapons, you should strongly consider using the maximum number of F-16s available to you on every mission. If you are low on fuel, you should talk to your personal version of Radar O'Reilly, your enterprising company clerk named *Falcnr*, and acquire a few thousand pounds of extra fuel.

- The third rule is to *never* assign more than two F-16s to a single flight group.

Wingleaders make decisions, but wingmen simply follow their wingleader. You always want two aircraft in a flight group to provide cover for each other, but the more winglead-

ers you have, the more computer-controlled pilots will be actually making decisions and judgments during the mission. Always assign at least one flight of two F-16s to fly air cover on every mission.

- The fourth and final rule is manage your pilots wisely.

Use *Falcnr* to assign skills to each pilot, then rotate your pilots through flight duty. Remember, skills drop when good pilots become fatigued due to too much cockpit time, and poor pilots can only increase skills by actually flying missions. You need to carefully choose the pilots for each sortie based on their skills, being careful not to overfly your best pilots or underfly your worst pilots.

Putting It All Together

When you're ready to start assigning aircraft, first consider the target. Is the target airborne or ground based? How much ordnance will be required to destroy it? A single missile will destroy a single aircraft, but it may take multiple Mk-82 bombs to damage a bunker or building. A missile is effective against all aircraft within range, but an AGM-88 HARM missile is useless against runways. A single F-16 can carry six AGM-65 Mavericks, but an enemy column may consist of 30 or more vehicles. You must determine how much ordnance this attack will take, and then assign sufficient aircraft to carry the load.

Next, consider enemy defenses. Is there an airbase nearby? If so, additional F-16s may be required to fly Combat Air Patrol (CAP). Is the target heavily defended by SAMs? If so, you may need to send a flight of F-16s armed with HARMs and Shrikes in first to take out the air-defense radars. *Falccalc* helps you determine the enemy's exact strength and decide how many aircraft you need to allocate.

For example, if you have six F-16s available to attack a bridge with heavy air defenses, try sending one flight of two F-16s in with anti-radiation missiles to attack the defenses, one flight of two F-16s to fly cover, and the third flight armed with GBU-15 TV-guided bombs to attack the bridge. If, however, you have the same six F-16s to attack an armored column with 20 vehicles last sighted near an enemy airbase, try using two F-16s armed with a total of 12 Mavericks to attack the convoy, two F-16s to fly CAP over the target, and two F-16s with INTERCEPT waypoint actions to patrol over the enemy airbase.

You will almost never have as many aircraft as you need to execute the mission, and you have to make decisions on how to use your limited resources. Through careful planning and the use of user-made utilities like *Falccalc* and *Falcnr*, determine the resources required to destroy the target, then allocate the remaining resources to protect against the highest threats. **LGW**

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Wargame Survey Version 2.0

M. Evan Brooks must have lamented, "Look what they done to my paik-tography, Mom!" when he saw the missing section of the "Pre-20th Century Computer Wargames Survey" in *CGW* #107 (June, 1993). In our zeal to squeeze the maximum amount of text into a minimal amount of space, we accidentally elided a section from the annotated list. Unfortunately, we did not discover this until after it had gone to press. We hereby present the missing entries, with our apologies, at no extra charge.

LEGEND

NA — Data not available

LINE 1 — Title

LINE 2 — Machine Format: (At)ari/(C)ommodore/(Ap)ple II/(T)RS-80/II(GS)/(Am)iga/(ST)/(M)acintosh/(I)BM;

CGW Articles: Issue #'s in which game was mentioned (bold print refers to major article);

Company/Designer/Date of Publication/Price (O/P — Out of Print)

Rating:

- 0 = Good use as a magnet holder
- * = Avoid
- ** = Marginal
- *** = Average to good
- **** = Very good
- ***** = Highly Recommended
- N R = Not Rated

LINE 3 — Difficulty Level: (Beg)inner/(Int)ermediate/(Adv)anced

Emphasis:

(Land)/(Nav)al/(Air)/(Dip)lomatic/(Econ)omic

Level of Command: (Tac)tical/(Op)erational/(Str)ategic

of Players: (M = modem play)

Tactical: man-to-man up to company level (turns represent seconds to hours)

Operational: battalion-level to division-level (turns represent hours to weeks)

Strategic: corps-level to theater army or higher (turns represent weeks to years)

Military Organization

Fire Team	2 - 3
Squad	9 - 12
Platoon	40 - 50
Company	120 - 150
Battalion	500 - 1,000
Brigade	3,000 - 5,000
Division	10,000 - 15,000
Corps	20,000 - 80,000
Army	100,000 - up

DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR II

(Ap/C/I/M; #54,65) Strategic Studies Group; Roger Keating and Ian Trout; 1989; \$40.00; ***

Int/Land/Tac-Op

0-2

See above. Covers the Battles of Gaines Mill, Stones River, Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE CIVIL WAR III

(Ap/C/I; #57) Strategic Studies Group; Roger Keating and Ian Trout; 1989; \$40.00; ***

Int/Land/Tac-Op

0-2

See above. Covers the Battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville.

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

(C/I/S/Am/GS; #34,39) Cinemaware; Kellyn Beeck; 1987; O/P; **+

Int/Land/Op

1

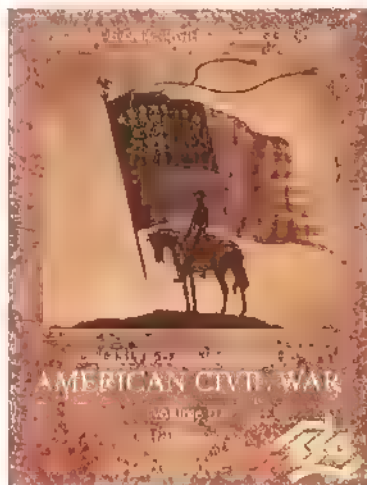
Graphically superb, this medieval simulation of the Norman-Saxon reunification of England is a series of arcade sequences loosely strung together. With sword duels, tournaments and sieges, the major elements are present; it is just that the simulation resembles a series of arcade trials held together by story boards.

DIPLOMACY

(C*/I/Am/ST; #4.5) Avalon Hill; NA; 1984; \$34.95; ***

Int/Land/Dip-Str

1-6



While this rendition of the famous board game ostensibly covers Europe c. 1914, scenarios with less than seven opponents simulate the world of 1805 or 1870. The play remains the same, and the computer opponents are not overly intelligent. However, the basic game system is present and this alone is sufficient to gender a recommendation. Although a "revised" version was issued for the ST and Amiga, IBM owners are not missing anything important.

DISCOVERY: In the Steps of Columbus

(Am/I) Impressions; David Lester; 1992; \$59.95; **

Int/Nav-Land/Op-Str

1

The 500th Anniversary of Columbus was PIC (politically incorrect). The movies, television, books quickly became major "busts." This game was no different. Slow, dull, user-unfriendly.

DUEL FOR ATLANTA

(Ap) SGP; NA; NA; NA; NA

NA

NA

An early "simulcast" — release of board and computer wargames simultaneously. Both vanished quickly.

EMPIRE OF VENNOLANDUA

(Ap/I) Aegis Circle; NA; NA; NA; NA

NA

1-6

Conquest and magic in the Middle Ages, poof! — it disappeared.

EXCALIBUR

(Ar; #4.2, 4.4) APX; Chris Crawford; NA; O/P; ***+

Int/Land/Str

1

Chris Crawford's initial rendition of the Arthurian legend, *Excalibur* is a strategic rendition of the unification of Great Britain. Good graphics and an interesting story line cause this product to still generate a recommendation, even on an obsolete machine. We are anxious to see how his upcoming project on this subject matter will play.

FEUDAL LORDS

(Am/ST) Impressions; NA; NA; NA; NA

NA

NA

More of an arcade game than a strategy game. Hack and slash to glory.



FIELDS OF GLORY

(I) MicroProse ; NA; 1993; NA; NA

Int/Land/Op

1-2

A "miniatures"-like version of the Battle of Waterloo. Although designed by MicroProse UK, preliminary looks appear promising.

FIGHTING FOR ROME

(Am/ST/I; #86,96) Merit/Impressions ; Edward Grabowski;

1991; \$49.95; **

Int/Land/Tac

1-2

A clumsy interface coupled with mediocre graphics shows why British products are generally not ready for the American market. Still a detailed game of Roman military tactics; superseded by *Cohort II*.

FORT APACHE

(Am/I) Impressions ; Edward Grabowski; 1991; \$49.95; NA

NA

NA

Another product deemed not ready for the American public; the Wild West — British style.

FROM SUMTER TO APPOMATTOX

(I) Adanac; NA; 1993; \$59.95; N-R

Int/Land-Nav/Op-Str

1-2

A simulation of the American Civil War — from start to finish. Initial responses have been less than overwhelming, with mediocre graphics and bugs that make the game virtually unplayable. Yet problems are being rapidly fixed by the designer who is avidly attempting to support the product.

GALLEONS OF GLORY

(I; #79, 83) Broderbund; Gene Portwood; \$44.95; 1991; **

Beg/Nav/Tac

I

An "educational" game, with all the implica-

tions thereof. Circumnavigate the globe with Magellan, decide the proper mix of economics and shipping.

GENGHIS KHAN

(I; # 55) Koei; Kou Shibusawa; 1989; \$59.95; ***

Int/Land/Str

1-4

A detailed strategic and diplomatic simulation of Genghis Khan's drive for conquest, this simulation is thought-provoking and challenging. cf. also Nobunaga's Ambition and Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

GENGHIS KHAN II

(I) Koei; Kou Shibusawa; 1994; NA; NA

Int/Land/Str

1-4

A proposed revision using better graphics, sound capabilities and AI.

GETTYSBURG: THE TURNING POINT

(A/Am/C/I/Am; # 33, 51) Strategic Simulations, Inc.;

Chuck Kroegel

and David Landrey; 1986; \$59.95; ***

Adv/Land/Tac-Op

1-2

Possibly SSI's best seller in the Civil War simulation market, *Gettysburg: The Turning Point* is a detailed grand tactical recreation of the Civil War's most famous battle. While its graphics may appear dated, the game play is still high enough to garner a recommendation.

GLOBAL DILEMMA: GUNS OR BUTTER

(M/I; # 77) Mindscape; Chris Crawford; 1990; \$49.95; **

Int/Land/Op-St

I

Graphically dull, but economically detailed (albeit unrealistic) simulation of warfare and its impact on society. Some interesting concepts are marred by an otherwise undistinguished game.

GOLD OF THE AMERICAS

(I/S/Am; #68) Strategic Studies Group; Stephen Hart; 1989;

\$40.00; ***+

Int/Land/Op

1-4

A semi-light hearted look at the Age of Discovery in the New World, this game may lack a serious gamer's historical basis, but it more than makes up for it in ease of play and entertainment.

GRAND ARMEE

(I) SDJ; NA; 1992; \$25.00; NA

Int/Land/Op-Str

2

Shareware simulation of Napoleonic strategic options in the period of the First Empire. Note that there is no computer opponent.

GREAT BATTLES

(ST; #38) Royal Software; NA; NA; NA; NA ?/Land/?

I

The Battles of Austerlitz, Waterloo, Shiloh and Gettysburg.

GREAT NAPOLEONIC BATTLES

(ST/I) Impressions; Edward Grabowski; 1991; NA; NA

Int/Land/Op

1-2; M (1993 edition)

A simulation of the Napoleonic battles of Waterloo, Marengo and Quatre Bras, as well as a construction editor to "design-your-own." To be revised in 1993 with modern capabilities.

HALLS OF MONTEZUMA

(Ap/C/I/M/Am; #45) Strategic Studies Group; Roger Keating and Ian Trout; 1988; \$40.00; ***

Int/Land/Op

1-2

The history of the U.S. Marine Corps, most of the scenarios herein cover the 20th century. However, the initial scenario (Mexico City) does cover the anti-climax of the Mexican War in a tactical rendition. Using the Battlefront system, the game is accurate, but does not have the spirit of 19th century warfare.

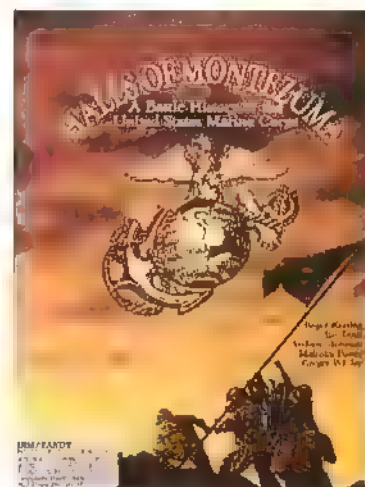
HEART OF AFRICA

(C; #25) Electronic Arts; D. Bunten; 1985; O/P; **+

NA

NA

A less successful sequel to *Seven Cities of Gold*, this product is an arcade-like African explorer game. It owes its ancestry more to Hollywood (*King Solomon's Mines*) than to history. **CSW**



ON STRIKE

Origin's Strike Commander

by Tom "KC" Basham



Origin's *Strike Commander* is an action-packed, disk space consuming, CPU-demanding cross between an action/role-playing game and a flight simulator. As in the *Wing Commander* series, one assumes the personality of a single pilot and proceeds through a multifaceted story line.

Visions of the Future

Strike takes place in the year 2011. Following a U.S.-Iraq war in 1994, middle eastern nations halt oil exports to the U.S., leading to the bankruptcy of the FDIC, the secession of Texas and the fall of the Union. Eventually, the majority of governments go bankrupt and the majority of armies are disbanded. Multi-national corporations fill the vacuum left by

and draws the player into *Strike's* fantasy. To fully appreciate *Strike*, though, requires a good deal of reading.

While the story is attention holding, it has a few weak points. First, the actual technical section of the manual is quite short compared to the story section, and lacks detail. Second, Stern's character is a little too "politically correct" to be the leader of rogue mercenaries in a Road Warrioresque 21st century, accepting only missions that serve to unite warring factions and feed starving children. Dialogues with Stern are a bit too corny for some tastes. Third, nitpickers will find a few other complaints with Origin's story line, especially when it comes to ranks. Stern, a former aviator for the U.S. Navy, is referred to as both a Colonel and a Commander. Another officer attained the rank of Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Navy — a very rare distinction!

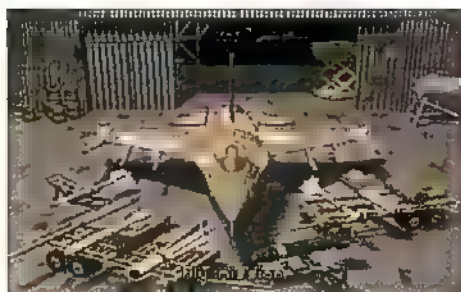
Installation and Compatibility

Strike comes on eight 1.44 MB floppies, and the optional Speech Accessory Pack (sold separately) uses three more. Installing both products requires around 41 MBs of free hard disk space. Origin states that *Strike* is incompatible with disk compression utilities such as Stacker and DBLSPC, and that it must reside on an uncompressed partition. Feedback from players on CompuServe indicates that *Strike* can be made to run on compressed partitions, but may require configuration tweaking to make it work.

Installation is fairly straightforward, although time consuming. On the test bed 486-50, *Strike* took over 20 minutes to install. Fortunately, manual intervention was required only during the first five minutes. A documentation check is required during installation, but the producer has no other copy protection. The install program for both *Strike* and the speech pack feature hardware auto-detection schemes that are not com-

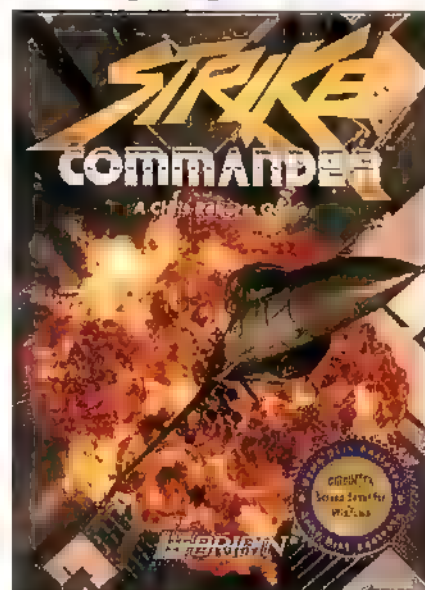
pletely foolproof. On the test bed machine, *Strike* installed flawlessly, but the speech pack hung the machine. Both installers have an "-a" option that bypasses the auto-detection routines and solves most installation errors.

Strike has some serious joystick compatibility problems. It supports the Thrustmaster WCS and FCS, but does not support analog rudder controls. In fact, *Strike* won't read the FCS "hat" switch properly on most PCs unless analog rudder pedals are disconnected first. Other users have reported compatibility problems with high-end game cards. The most common solution has been to pull or disable the high-end game card and resort to



the defunct governments, and hire unemployed military personnel as mercenaries to protect their assets and execute military strikes against rival corporations. The player is part of a band of F-16-flying mercenaries operating out of Turkey, the safe haven for mercenaries in the 21st century. The player's band of mercenaries, the Wildcats, are led by Commander James Stern. Stern adheres to a strict set of ethics, and only accepts missions that comply with those ethics.

The game's manual is written in a *Soldier of Fortune*-style that promotes the game's fantasy world. Although the apocalyptic picture Origin paints of the future may not appeal to everyone, the manual fits that picture well



TITLE	Strike Commander
PRICE	\$65.00 + \$20.00 for Speech Accessory Pack
SYSTEM	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	486-33MHz, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 41MB (with Speech Pack) hard disk space
PROTECTION	Documentation check during installation
DESIGNER	Chris Roberts
PUBLISHER	Origin Austin, TX (512) 317-5200

lower quality game ports, such as on the Sound Blaster. I find this an unacceptable solution. Once the RCS pedals were removed from the test bed system, *Strike* operated fine with a Thrustmaster ACM game card. If one is using standard joysticks one is unlikely to experience problems.



Strike is also very picky about memory managers and runs best on a clean configuration. At Origin's suggestion, I excluded two regions of memory, but when using a loaded configuration, still suffered from crashes complaining about "null pointer assignments" nearly every session. Despite the frequency of this crash, *Strike* seems to be relatively bug free otherwise.

Visuals

Graphics are a mixed bag of joys and irritants. Rendering of aircraft in flight may be the most detailed I have ever seen. Further, *Strike* features attractive, rolling terrain, complete with snow-capped mountains and winding valleys. Streaking through a twisting canyon with 6,000 foot walls at 500 knots is great fun!

Strike uses a hazing on objects at the edge of visual range. The effect causes mountains to slowly fade in and out of view. Unfortunately, objects only fade into view at fairly close range. It gives the impression of flying in a perpetual fog bank with a 15 or 20 mile visibility. The horizon in *Strike* is the single ugliest representation of the Earth's curvature ever to grace the PC. A wide, stark-white band is superimposed over the margin between earth and sky. The band completely blocks view of the actual horizon, making it difficult to tell up from down.

Bit-mapped representations of cities are scattered over the landscape. As with most bit-mapped graphics, from a distance they look absolutely wonderful, but become distorted and unintelligible at close range. Most cities, therefore, are only eye candy, and not meant to be viewed close up. Actual ground targets (bridges, power plants, etc.) are unattractive silhouetted polygons.

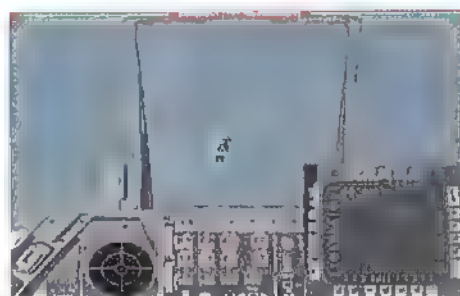
Strike's graphics have many finely polished edges, though. Bit-mapped explosions are vibrant, tracers litter the sky during combat, missiles have consistent smoke trails, and many objects will have glints of reflected sunlight, making them visible at greater ranges. Many external views, including a "weapon"

view and a "victim" view allow the player to watch many enemies die dramatic deaths.

Strike supports a view panning system using either the arrow keys or the coolie hat on a Thrustmaster FCS. This panning system models the movement of the human head and allows the user to control when and where to look. Although it's easy to become disoriented, after some practice, this is one of the most effective methods of view control I have used. Unfortunately, *Strike* only marginally supports a padlocking view system. Although there is a padlock-style view, it only functions while the player maintains radar lock on the target. This system is useless in situations where visual tracking is most needed, such as close-quarter knife fights and when a bandit sneaks in on one's tail.

Sounds

Sound support in the base package is merely average, containing engine sounds, missile lock tones, gun sounds, screeches when other aircraft pass nearby, and dull "thunks" indicating bullet impacts. The optional Speech Accessory Pack adds about \$20, 5 MBs of disk space, and a few additional sounds to the product. With the speech pack installed, the death screams of enemy pilots are heard over the player's radio, wingmen will vocally warn of threatening bandits, and will announce when various activities need to be performed.



On the downside, only very few of the between-mission cinematic sequences utilize digitized voice. Players installing the speech pack should still be prepared to read a lot of dialogue.

Gameplay

Gameplay focuses on action, and many corners have been tweaked for the sake of player enjoyment. That is, gamers should *not* expect a flight simulator. *Strike* is an *action* game with elements of a flight simulator.

Strike has two modes, training and game. Training mode allows one to practice either air-to-air or air-to-ground skills, while game mode is a role-playing adventure along the lines of *Wing Commander*. The player begins as Stern's apprentice for squadron leader, and works his or her way into control of the Wildcat squadron. Although there is a defi-

QQP's

Strategies of the Month

Vol. 22

A monthly column to improve the quality of play

CONQUERED KINGDOMS: • There are many different variations of play in Conquered Kingdoms that can bring a whole new feel to the game. Try playing with Single or Alternating city starts. This will change your strategies immensely. Another test of your skills is to play the short or long game. Again you must completely revise your approach. Playing short game is much tougher than the normal game in that you now must covet each unit that you have placed in your ranks. The long games make you plan more for the future, thus you would have to capture the resources early and keep a defense against your enemy. For the experts: Choose only one of the starting areas, while the computer will start in more areas. This should give you quite a challenge.

BATTLES OF DESTINY: • "Pesky bombers, always destroying my front lines!". This quote is one that we have heard many times from fans. The solution: *fighters*. These quick and deadly units can quickly clear the skies from bombers, air transports, and other fighters. This will give you a chance to wage war from the sky with your own bombers. Once these bombers and fighters are out of the way, have two or three air transports ready to plunge into the heartland of your adversary.

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The Red Crystal

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nite story line, multiple paths appear to be in evidence, allowing the player some room for individual preferences.

Air-to-air combat in training mode is fairly uneventful. Although the player can choose Rookie, Veteran, or Ace level pilots to fly against, computer-controlled pilots are fairly easy to beat. After flying straight and level for several minutes against two MiG-21s with Ace pilots, the MiGs still won't have achieved a firing position. Overall, the artificial intelligence appears extremely weak. Enemy aircraft tend to make only horizontal maneuvers, even when flying high-horsepower birds like F-15s and Su-27s. In every battle, when a bandit saddled up on my six, simply pulling a loop caused him to overshoot. During

ground attacks, bandits often position themselves behind one's bird and follow it through an attack without firing. Air-to-air combat has certainly been tweaked to give the player more than a fair chance.

Flight modeling was acceptable, with a few rough edges. To its credit, one's turn radius varies appropriately with speed, vertical maneuvers can be used to tighten turns, available G-loading is reduced as speed falls, and pulling Gs sufficiently depletes speed. Origin's rep on CompuServe stated that turn performance had been deliberately tweaked to make it easier to play, but in general the flight model feels good.

On the downside, *Strike* does not handle angle of attack very well. Pulling the nose above the horizon while reducing throttle will cause the velocity vector on the HUD to correctly point downward, but the F-16 will continue to climb until airspeed drops under 50kts and stalls. Due to this, realistic landings using a nose-high descent are not possible.

Strike suffers from a severe thirst for CPU power. The box recommends at least a 486-33, and many 386 owners have reported woefully slow frame rates. Even on the test bed

486-50VLB using a 2MB disk cache, *Strike* often paused when loading images. The frame rate would move incredibly smoothly during combat until a target was hit, then the game would pause for one or two seconds while loading a bit map of an explosion. Despite using the large disk cache, the hard drive would spin constantly during the pause.

Strike is not and does not attempt to be a high-fidelity simulation of flight and air com-



bat. It focuses on action and excitement. It doesn't have the stark realism of *Falcon 3.0* or *Red Baron*, but has a much gentler learning curve. *Strike* compares more directly to products that focus on action rather than simulation, such as *F-117 Stealth Fighter* or the *Jetfighter* series, but with much better graphics and sound. *Strike* is designed to get the player in the air and having fun in the shortest amount of time possible, installation delays notwithstanding. **CGW**

STICK IT TO YOUR NOTEBOOK.

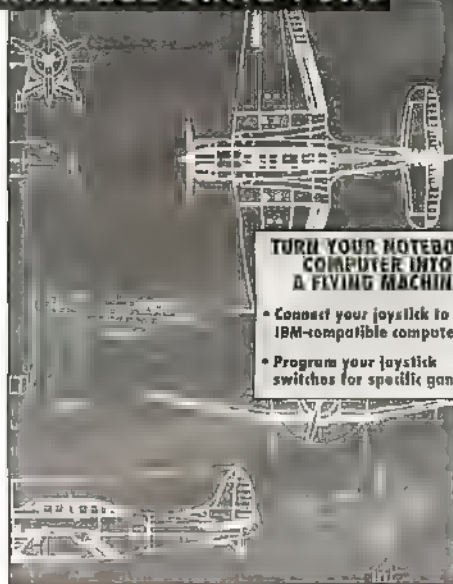
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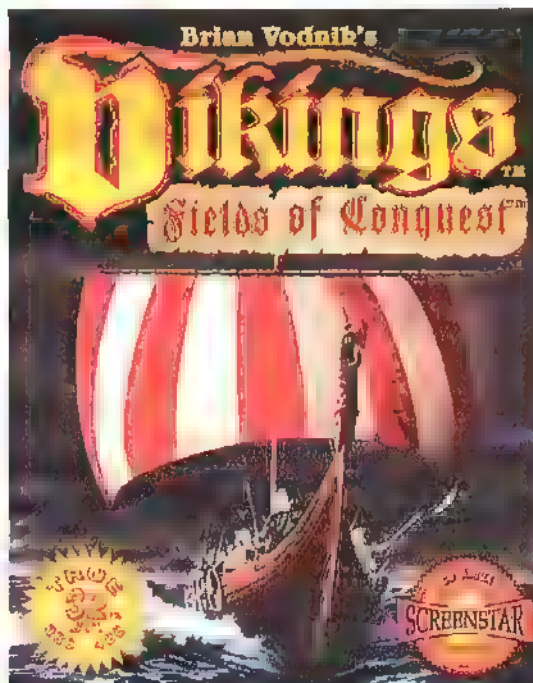
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Amazing Computing, Nov. '92

"... REAL WINNER! Superior graphics and superb gameplay."
Chicago Tribune, Sept. 25, '92

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Computer Trade Watch, June 22, '92

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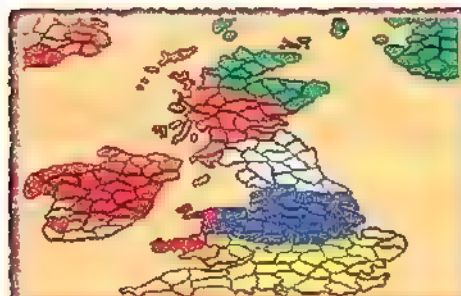
CU Amiga



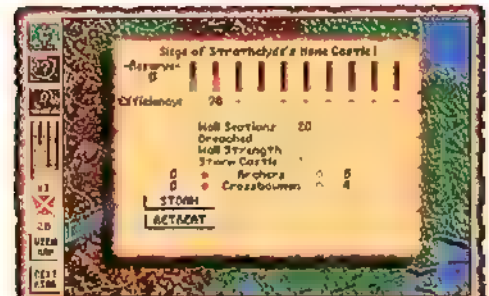
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Collective Consciousness

NovaLogic's Comanche Maximum Overkill Mission Disk One

by Bryan Walker

An avid computer game and flight simulator fan, the author is also an AH-64 Apache pilot and Armament Officer for the U.S. Army. He is a combat veteran of Desert Storm, currently stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. The author's views do not reflect official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the United States government.

Released during the '92 Christmas season, NovaLogic's *Comanche Maximum Overkill* (CMO) immediately set a breathtaking standard for PC flight-sim graphics. Unfortunately, as I reported in issue #104, the game lacked the depth, accuracy and variety of some other flight-sim titles. Despite tremendous sales, NovaLogic knew that players were going to want more very soon. The *Comanche Maximum Overkill Mission Disk One* (MD1) is the first of two add-on disks for their popular title.

What Boots Up...

Installing MD1 is quick and easy, increasing the size of the \COMANCHE directory to just over 12 megabytes. After just a few minutes and keystrokes, the player can enjoy the enhancements MD1 has to offer.

New Enemies — The limited enemy selection of the original CMO gets a shot in the arm with MD1. The rugged Mi-24 Hind attack helicopter, the BRDM-3 armored car, and the infamous SCUD-B mobile missile launcher now enrich the target environment. Enemy AI is also stronger, forcing the player to fly better and fight smarter to survive.



New Friendlies — One of MD1's greatest improvements is the ability to fly with multiple wingmen. Even better, the AI of the wingmen is much stronger. Now capable of fighting independently, the enhanced wing-

men make the job of *really* raising hell much easier. Compared with the airhead that the player was originally saddled with in CMO, these new allies are a blessing.

New Missions — Many players completed the original game's 20 missions in a matter of days. MD1 provides 30 new missions to tackle, divided into three 10-mission "campaigns." The Overload missions are training cakewalks, with the player flying a nearly invulnerable Comanche bristling with weapons. The Restore Peace and Clean Sweep missions become progressively more difficult, with more realistic durability settings and weapons loads. While certain missions may be too challenging for some gamers, the general play balance and variety is far superior to CMO's original forays.

New Graphics — MD1 also adds Arctic and Desert terrain models, along with new graphic touches such as tents and sparse trees. Observant players may also notice a couple of surprises swimming around, too!

Program Update — Even though the original CMO proved to be virtually bug-free, various patches and refinements are included to ensure compatibility with most major hardware. I've yet to encounter a single glitch with either CMO or MD1 using DOS 5 or 6, which is more than most players could say about nearly any other game on the market.

...Must Come Down

While other touches such as new music are present, I honestly expected more from an add-on disk that retails for \$40. Unfortunately, MD1 doesn't fix what I regard as the two major weaknesses of CMO. First, the flight model *still* handles like a B-52! While CMO's Comanche is fast, I was hoping MD1 would find a way to add more aerobatic capability. Even with MD1 installed, CMO's Comanche still flies like Barney Life is at the controls.

Second, as in the original CMO, the campaigns and missions of MD1 just don't mesh. Despite their variety and superior balance, the lack of a constant enemy and progressive plot can make it difficult to "get into" the game. In addition, MD1 still neglects award sequences, watering down a player's sense of accomplishment upon completion of a campaign.

Armchair gunship jocks who enjoyed the original CMO will have a ball with the new



missions, graphics and enemies MD1 provides. Players expecting a big improvement in the game's depth or flight model will probably not be satisfied. *Mission Disk One* is like refueling a gunship without rearming it. Players can fly to new places and see new things, but some will find MD1 doesn't deliver the ordnance it takes to raise the *Comanche Maximum Overkill* experience to the next level.

The author can be reached on GEnie at B.WALKER10, or America Online at WALKER34.cgw



TITLE:	Comanche Maximum Overkill
PRICE:	Mission Disk 1
SYSTEM:	\$39.95
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM
	386-16 or greater, VGA graphics,
	4 MB ram, 8 MB hard drive space,
	original Maximum Overkill required
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Kyle Freeman, John Garcia
PUBLISHER:	NovaLogic, Inc.
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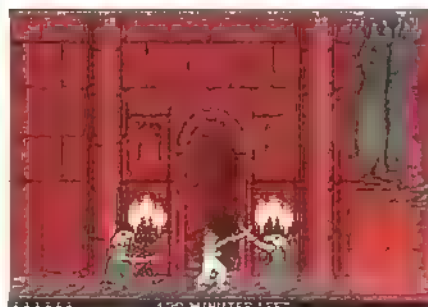
THE TERMINATOR 2029: OPERATION SCOUR: The Terminators are back! This time they've returned on the first mission disk for *The Terminator 2029—Operation Scour*. Strange things begin to occur after the destruction of an Orbital Satellite Platform during a systematic clean-up of remaining Terminators, Hunter-Killers and Eradicators—certain Skynet forces are coming back on-line. In addition, a strange, new weapon code-named Guardian has appeared, and with devastating results. Reassigned to the Roosevelt Island Base, the player's mission is to seek out and put an end to this new threat to the Resistance. Such is the background for what looks to be an intense sequel to *T2029*, a mission disk featuring an additional 12 action-packed scenarios (*T2029* required). The dark, futuristic tone of the Terminator films is reproduced well, with graphics, sound and game play identical to the original *T2029*. Additional armor and weapons have been provided to assist in the new challenges the player must face. Failure in one's mission, however, will result in termination! IBM (\$29.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

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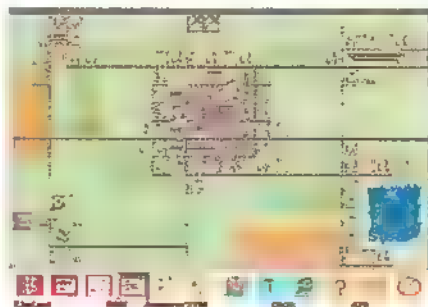
PRINCE OF PERSIA 2 — THE SHADOW AND THE FLAME: Anyone who has ever sword-fought with shadows behind closed doors, or sat through a dull lecture with visions of Doug Fairbanks sauntering suavely through their heads, is likely to have this game of high action and adventure unravel their turban. Designer Jordan Mechner has made his reputation by providing games with fluid character animations, tough action-oriented puzzles, and the ability to tell rich stories with short cinematic segues. In his latest release, he draws upon all of his past strengths and raises them to the highest minaret. Drawing loosely from the Persian legends in the "1001 Arabian Nights," Mechner tells the tale of a Prince robbed of his name and bride by a mysterious imitator. The imitator, of course, turns out to be the evil vizier, Jaffar, who hopes to steal the Sultan's kingdom. The player's quest is to lead the Prince through 15 levels of diffi-



The Terminator 2029: Operation Scour



Prince of Persia 2: The Shadow and the Flame



Speculator



FlixMix



Desert Strike

cult action puzzles, battling guards and magic creatures on his way to a show down with Evil. Beautiful music and background graphics team up with Mechner's amazing trademark animation to create one of the best action games yet. However, be warned, young Princes-to-be: the puzzles and difficult action sequences will have even the best gamers bashing their turbans against the nearest solid surface. IBM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

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SPECULATOR: Having its roots in *Acquire*, *SimCity* and *Market Madness*, *Speculator*, a game of land acquisition, pits the player against three computer opponents in the trading of properties and land holding companies, the expansion of existing businesses, and the development of parks and recreation facilities. The goal is a simple one—acquire the greatest amount of assets by game's end. Turns are timed with each play period being 30 days long. At the end of each month, a financial tabloid appears on screen with a summary of that month's limited investment activity for the player and his or her opponents. Available for IBM compatibles, *Speculator* itself is "freeware" (freely distributable). Additional Map Sets are available for \$19.95 each (a combination package of 3 Map Sets is \$39.95) and include Ancient Tymes, Country Side, Slick Cities and Mooned Puzzles. IBM (\$19.95 - \$39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.

Celeris
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FLIXMIX: If this were an old, *Hollywood Reporter* headline, it might read "FLIX MIX HITS HIX." The translation (for all non-Hollywood types) would mean this game is well received by the masses of computer gamers. While the reviews remain to be seen, *FlixMix* is a definite rush as mind game/puzzles go. One of several moving images is cut apart into a number of player defined pieces and scattered around the edges of the screen. In the middle is a grid wherein these pieces are reassembled. It's the moving images, however, that add such a challenging dimension to the game. Although there are many levels of difficulty (largely determined by the number of pieces one opts to assemble), it can be frustrating for some to try and assemble a picture from "a moving target." True puzzle devotees are likely to find several hours of rapture in this product, grooving to the fine music and the dancing graphics. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

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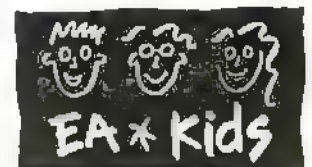
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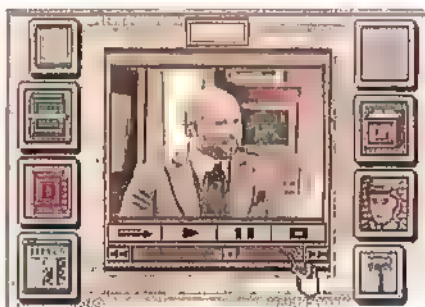
JAKE AND JENNIFER EAGLE IN EAGLE EYE MYSTERIES: Young detectives ages 8 and up should keep an eye out for this adventure designed to develop deductive reasoning and reading skills. A fresh offering from Electronic Arts' new EA*Kids division, *Eagle Eye Mysteries* offers young sleuths the opportunity to match wits with some of the world's youngest and smartest junior detectives. Players can try their hand at solving 50 cases as a member of the Eagle Eye Detective Agency, ranging from the Case of the Stolen Skateboard to the Case of the Basketball Bloopster. Interaction with the game world is very intuitive, all input being handled with a mouse. Graphics and audio are of very high quality, taking good advantage of 256-color VGA graphic cards and major audio boards. The real treat, however, lies in the area of discovery. In the process of becoming a master detective, junior sleuths in *Eagle Eye Mysteries* will learn about history, science and logic, and will do so in an enjoyable and encouraging atmosphere. Teaming up with Jake and Jennifer will provide a positive and fun learning experience. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

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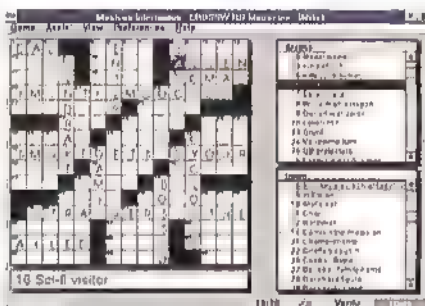
SHERLOCK HOLMES CONSULTING DETECTIVE VOLUME III: The game's afoot ... again! It's time once more to don one's cap and cloak and assume the role of London's most famous sleuth. No, not Chief Inspector Clouseau. Rather, the indubitable Sherlock Holmes. This third volume of mystery cases from ICOM allows the player to test his or her skills as a detective in solving three more "interactive" murder mysteries. In "The Solicitous Solicitor," players must determine if the untimely death of an unscrupulous casanova was by "natural causes" or not. "The Banker's Final Debt" provokes the question of why anyone would want to silence a hard-working, quiet, unassuming man. The third case, "The Thames



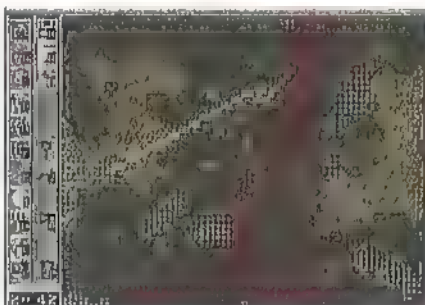
Jake and Jennifer Eagle in Eagle Eye Mysteries



Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective Volume III



Lyriq Crosswords



Ambush at Sorinor



Lethal Weapon

Murders," dredges up a total of five bodies and the possibility of a serial killer on the loose. Subtle, but noticeable, improvements have clearly been woven into this newest Holmes volume. Video images appear crisper and cleaner than ever, and the game runs acceptably well on slower systems. All in all, this title looks like another solid release for mystery buffs and Holmes devotees. IBM CD-ROM (\$69.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

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LYRIQ CROSSWORDS: Here's a product one might find on the President's laptop. With all of the aerodynamic slickness of the Windows interface and scads of crossword niceties, Lyriq seems to have one of the jazziest puzzle collections in the arena. The package claims 250 puzzles from such publishers as the *Washington Post* and the *Penny Press*. Handy menu options allow the player to get hints, check off clues as they are solved, print out puzzles, and play in a timed tournament mode. Lyric also offers a monthly service wherein they send 25 new puzzles a month to its members. IBM with Windows (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Mindcraft Software
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Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 320-5215

AMBUSH AT SORINOR: Mindcraft's *Siege* engine has found new lands to lord over in this real-time fantasy wargame. The player takes the role of a mercenary commander, hired by various clans to carry out missions of great import — for a price. Hiring troops and purchasing traps, the player orchestrates clandestine attacks on unsuspecting enemy troops. Though the interface has been rearranged a bit, the basic mechanics are the same as in *Siege*. Also like *Siege*, *Ambush* offers a complete scenario construction kit. Unlike *Siege*, these scenarios can be combined into campaign games for those who "play the long game." Interesting as a concept, some players might take issue with the implementation; those who were bothered by the slow and jerky performance of the earlier game will find much of the same here. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Ocean of America, Inc.
1855 O'Toole Ave., Suite D-102
San Jose, CA 95131
(408) 954-0201

LETHAL WEAPON: This new action release from Ocean is yet another entry in the overcrowded field of look alike, side-

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Deutsche Aerospace Airbus

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Circle Reader Service #104

Taking a peek

scrolling, platform shooters. Based loosely on the movie by the same title, *Lethal Weapon* offers the joystick jockey the opportunity to play through a series of four missions and a grand finale as either Detective Riggs or Murtaugh. Each mission is divided into two or three levels with "extreme force" necessary to reach the end of each. There is no ability to adjust the difficulty of play. However, codes are provided upon the completion of each mission so one can pick up where they left. Amiga, IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

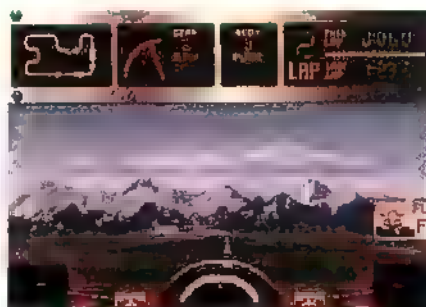
Philips Interactive Media of America
11111 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90099-3663
(800) 845-7301

VIDEO SPEEDWAY: Our initial expectation for this CD-I product was that we would be able to race the digitized video image of actual race cars around the tracks of authentic race courses. (That's the image that CD storage and the title *Video Speedway* conjured in our minds). Instead, one drives a bit-mapped car which uses all of the physics of the classic *Pole Position* and only shows video images during the instant replay of a crash (and the replays occur randomly, not being tied to any car's actual position during the crash). It's fine for *Pole Position* fans looking for a little extra glitz, but not for the hard-core racing aficionado. CD-I. Circle Reader Service #11.

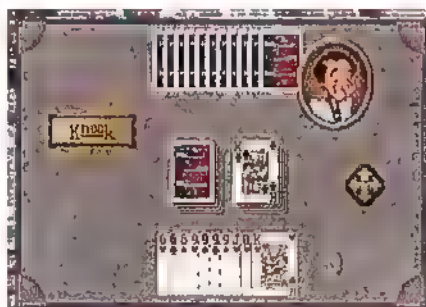
Sierra On-Line, Inc.
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(209) 683-4468

HOYLE CLASSIC CARD GAMES: Spanning a range of competitiveness for players from kids to card sharks, Sierra has dealt out another winning hand with the latest installment in their Hoyle Book of Games Series. Although *Hoyle Classic* forges little new ground, it does continue a fine tradition of providing the gamer with a choice selection of classics card games in an attractive, competent and enjoyable package. Provided in this collection are Bridge, Euchre, Hearts, Klondike, Gin Rummy, Cribbage, Crazy 8's and Old Maid. Each game has easy-to-customize play options, including several variations apiece. Like all of Sierra's recent releases, 256-color VGA graphics, major sound card support and the ability to run the game under both DOS and Windows provide the proverbial icing on the cake. IBM (\$49.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

INCA: Winner of the Best Graphics award at Supergames Show Paris, 1992, this new release from Coktel Vision is part space combat simulator, part arcade shoot 'em up, and part graphic puzzler (but not exceptionally



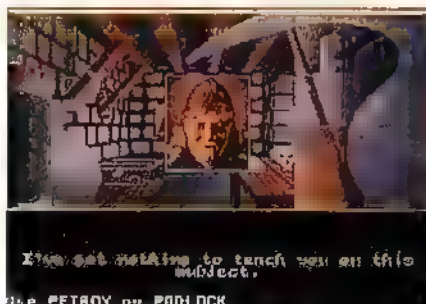
Video Speedway



Hoyle Classic Card Games



Inca



The Prophecy



Harpoon Designers' Series II: Post-graduate Naval Operations and Tactics

difficult in any area). Accompanied by a compelling new-age soundtrack (a CD of the soundtrack is available direct from Sierra), this game offers one an experience that is extremely diverse. Space and time converge as one rockets through the heavens battling space age conquistadors and as one explores the shores of 16th century Lake Titicaca. As the name implies, all this is somehow tied to the ancient Inca civilization, with the player being the one to fulfill a 500 year old prophecy. Most gamers should find *Inca* an interesting game, despite weak documentation and the inability to save one's progress as in traditional adventures (codes are provided at specific junctures during play). A CD-ROM version is planned for later release. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

THE PROPHECY: Another new release from Sierra's "French connection," *The Prophecy* is an interesting puzzle-based graphic adventure. Again, an evil sorcerer is hard at work wreaking havoc and seeking absolute control. Now, the player, as Ween, must fulfill the Prophecy, the promise that "On the day of the great eclipse, if three grains of sand are placed in the REVUSS by a brave hero, the enemy will be vanquished." The problem is that only three days remain for the Prophecy to come to pass. Three days in which to complete three quests. As has become the norm, 256-color VGA graphics are provided and major sound cards are supported. IBM (\$59.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Three-Sixty Pacific, Inc.
2105 S. Bascom Ave., Suite 165
Campbell, CA 95008-9664
(409) 776-2187

HARPOON DESIGNERS' SERIES II: POST-GRADUATE NAVAL OPERATIONS AND TACTICS: Armchair Admirals will be pleased to know that they have more "harpoons" at their disposal, specifically, 48 new scenarios from the *Harpoon Designers' Series II*. Designed to illustrate difficult lessons in Naval Operations and Tactics, this new collection challenges the player to master the art of modern naval warfare. Twelve new scenarios are provided for each of the four *Harpoon Battlesets* available, offering the opportunity for one to develop effective first strike capabilities, conduct anti-submarine warfare against vastly different platforms, and locate the enemy while remaining safely concealed. A Data Annex (with complete information on military bases, weapon systems and sensors) and Tactical Guide are included. The *Harpoon Designers' Series II* requires the *Harpoon* program and *Battlesets*. IBM (\$39.95). Circle Reader Service #15. **CGW**

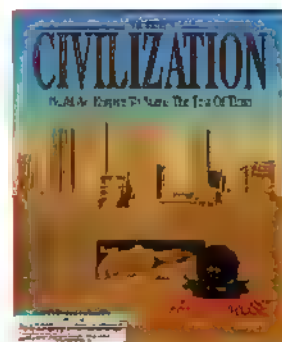


COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World's* Hall of Fame have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which CGW has in its possession.

- The Bard's Tale* (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many formats
- Chessmaster* (Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many formats
- Civilization* (MicroProse, 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Mac
- Dungeon Master* (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Earl Weaver Baseball* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Empire* (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
- F-19 Stealth Fighter* (MicroProse, 1988)
IBM
- Gettysburg: The Turning Point* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
- Gunship* (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM
- Harpoon* (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Kampfgruppe* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats
- King's Quest V* (Sierra, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, CD-ROM
- M-1 Tank Platoon* (MicroProse, 1989)
Amiga, IBM
- Mech Brigade* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many formats
- Might & Magic* (New World Computing, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM, Mac
- M.U.L.E.* (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64
- Pirates* (MicroProse, 1987)
Many formats
- Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- Red Baron* (Dynamix, 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
- SimCity* (Maxis, 1987)
Many formats
- Starflight* (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Mac, Sega
- Their Finest Hour* (LucasArts, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima III* (Origin, 1983)
Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
- Ultima IV* (Origin, 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
- Ultima VI* (Origin, 1990)
Amiga, IBM
- War in Russia* (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
- Wasteland* (Interplay, 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM
- Wing Commander* (Origin, 1991)
IBM, Sega
- Wizardry* (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many formats
- Zork* (Infocom, 1981)
Many formats

Induction Ceremony! *Sid Meier's Civilization* (MicroProse, 1991) Amiga, IBM, Macintosh



Most readers know that Sid Meier holds the record for having the most titles in the CGW Hall of Fame. *Sid Meier's Civilization* makes the fifth Sid Meier title inducted into the prestigious circle of award-winning games. Previous inductees included *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, *Gunship*, *Pirates* and *Railroad Tycoon*. Interestingly, Meier built his reputation on flight simulators, but the addition of *Civilization* to the Hall of Fame means that his non flight classics now outnumber his flight simulator hits, underscoring his versatility as a designer.

Sid Meier's Civilization is a fascinating design that melds elements of construction with elements of combat. In many cases, it crossed the gender barrier and appealed to female gamers, even while hardcore (and predominantly male) wargamers appropriated the game as one of their own. Sid himself avoided calling the game a wargame from the very beginning, but eventually acceded to the point that a game which required one to move military units across a map and conquer other civilizations was *definitely* a wargame. Yet, many gamers argued that the task of *building* a civilization was enough of an interesting activity within itself, that the combat elements were almost secondary.

Sid Meier's Civilization does not attain its standing on the basis of advanced graphics, incredible sound, or sophisticated technology. Rather, it proves its excellence by providing a solid design with superlative gameplay. Economics, exploration, resource exploitation and management, military strategy and diplomacy are all areas that impact one's success or failure in *Sid Meier's Civilization*. The variety of decisions to be made seem endless and open-ended. Over and over again, our readers tell us that this game is addictive. We take that to mean that it is always worth another game. Such is greatness.

Top Adventure Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge	LucasArts	9.97
2	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	9.84
3	Star Control II	Accolade	9.77
4	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	9.72
5	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.56
6	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	9.55
7	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	9.54
8	King's Quest VI: Heir Today ..	Sierra	9.42
9	Les Manly in Lost in L.A.	Accolade	9.28
10	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.20

Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.45
2	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.68
3	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	9.62
4	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.51
5	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.41
6	Ultima VII	Origin	9.34
7	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	9.34
8	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.25
9	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	9.10
10	Bane of Cosmo Forge	Sir-Tech	9.05

Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	World Circuit	MicroProse	10.37
2	X-Wing	LucasArts	10.13
3	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.56
4	Acies of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.51
5	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.39
6	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.23
7	Stunt Island	Disney	9.23
8	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	9.09
9	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	9.06
10	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	10.18
2	Dune II	Virgin	9.74
3	Chessmaster 3000	Software Tools	9.32
4	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.13
5	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9.05
6	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	9.05
7	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.94
8	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	8.78
9	Hoya Book of Games Vol. 3	Sierra	8.78
10	Populous II	Electronic Arts	8.78

Top 100 Games

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Links 385 Pro	Access	SP	10.51
2	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.45
3	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	10.37
4	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.20
5	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	10.18
6	X-Wing	LucasArts	SI	10.13
7	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	SP	10.10
8	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	WG,ST	10.08
9	Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.97
10	V for Victory: Veltiya Luki	Three-Sixty	WG	9.93
11	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	9.84
12	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.77
13	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.75
14	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.74
15	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	9.72
16	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.68
17	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty	WG	9.63
18	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.63
19	Empire Deluxe	New World	WG	9.62
20	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.62
21	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.58
22	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.56
23	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	AD	9.55
24	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	9.54
25	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.51
26	Acies of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.51
27	Links	Access	SP	9.47
28	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.44
29	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	AD	9.42
30	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.41
31	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.39
32	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.37
33	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
34	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	RP	9.34
35	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.34
36	Chessmaster 3000	Software Tools	ST	9.32
37	High Command	Colorado Comp.	WG	9.29
38	Les Manly in Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.28
39	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
40	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.25
41	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.23
42	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.23
43	Lemmings	Psychosis	AC,ST	9.21
44	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.20
45	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.17
46	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
47	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.13
48	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.12
49	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
50	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10

Top Wargames

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	10.08
2 V for Victory: Valhalla Lull	Three-Sixty	9.93
3 The Perfect General	QQP	9.75
4 V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
5 Empire Deluxe	New World	9.62
6 Warlords	SSG	9.44
7 Pacific War	SSI	9.34
8 High Command	Colorado Comp.	9.29
9 Second Front	SSI	9.17
10 Conflict Korea	SSI	9.09

Top Action Games

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Wing Commander II	Origin	10.20
2 Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.63
3 Lemmings	Psychosis	9.21
4 Tetris Classic	Spectrum Holobyte	9.14
5 Lemmings 2: The Tribes	Psychosis	8.94
6 Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psychosis	8.92
7 Out of This World	Interplay	8.57
8 Terminator 2029	Balhesda	8.17
9 Speedball 2	Konam	7.92
10 Conan the Cimmerian	Virgin	7.81

Top Sports Games

GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1 Links 386 Pro	Access	10.51
2 Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	10.10
3 Links	Access	9.47
4 Hardball III	Accolade	9.37
5 Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
6 Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball III	SSI	8.88
7 NFL Pro League Football	Macro Sports	8.54
8 The Games Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50
9 PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	8.49
10 Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball I	SSI	8.49

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of CGW and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top fan lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

51 F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	9.09
The Dagger of Amun Ra	Sierra	9.09
Conflict Korea	SSI	9.09
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	9.08
Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Si	9.05
The Incredible Machine	RP	9.05
Quest for Glory I (VGA)	ST	9.05
The Lost Admiral	AD,RP	9.05
Red Storm Rising	ST	9.05
Conquests of the Longbow	SI	9.04
Silent Service II	Sierra	9.04
Quest for Glory II	AD,RP	9.03
Gunship 2000	Si	9.02
Police Quest 3	AD,RP	9.02
Ultima V	SI	9.01
Battles of Destiny	AD	9.00
Space Quest IV	RP	9.00
Western Front	WG,ST	9.00
Carriers At War	AD	8.98
The Adventures of Willy Beamish	SSI	8.98
Mech Warrior	WG	8.97
Veil of Darkness	AD	8.96
Lemmings 2: The Tribes	Dynamix	8.94
V for Victory: Market Garden	ST,SI	8.94
F-117A	RP	8.94
Oh, No! More Lemmings	AC,ST	8.94
The Is and of Dr. Brain	WG	8.94
Rise of the Dragon	SI	8.92
Martian Memorandum	AC,ST	8.92
Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball II	ST	8.91
Indianapolis 500	AD	8.89
Elvira	Dynamix	8.89
Command HQ	Access	8.86
Spellcasting 301 Spring Break	SSI	8.83
Rex Nebular	SI	8.82
Gateway to the Savage Frontier	RP	8.81
Great Naval Battles	WG,ST	8.80
Populous II	AD	8.79
Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	SSI	8.79
Heart of China	ST	8.78
Battlechess	AD	8.75
Gateway	ST	8.72
Starlight II	RP	8.71
Battles of Napoleon	Electronic Arts	8.70
F-15 Strike Eagle II	SSI	8.69
Pools of Darkness	WG	8.68
Typhoon of Steel	SI	8.67
Amada 2525	RP	8.63
Amazon	WG	8.62
Space Quest V: Mutal on	ST	8.60

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above.  = Top game of type.
AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

The Computer Gaming World Poll

PC Research Hits List of Top-Selling Software

April, 1993

PLAYING LATELY

Rank	Title and Source
1.	X-Wing (LucasArts)
2.	Strike Commander (Origin)
3.	Commander: Maximum Overkill (Novalogic)
4.	Alone in the Dark (Interplay)
5.	Links 386 - Pro (Access)
6.	Tony LaRussa Baseball II (Strategic Simulations)
7.	Wolfenstein 3-D/Spear of Destiny (Forgen)
8.	Links - Banff Springs (Access)
9.	Ultrabots (Novalogic)
10.	Commander Mission Disk #1 (Novalogic)
11.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Games)
12.	Hardball III (Accolade)
13.	Jump Jet (MicroPose)
14.	King's Quest VI (Sierra On-Line)
15.	Space Quest V (Sierra On-Line)
16.	Star Trek 25th Anniversary (Interplay)
17.	AD&D Unlimited Adventures (Strategic Simulations)
18.	Empire Deluxe (New World Computing)
19.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)

INTERCOM

Rank	Title and Source
1.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
2.	Operation Combat (Merit)
3.	Medieval Warriors (Merit)
4.	AD&D Gateway to Savage Frontier (Strategic Simulations)
5.	Legend of Kyrandia (Virgin Games)

Microsoft Files

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Prince of Persia (Broderbund)
2.	Spectre (Velocity)
3.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft)
4.	Lemmings (Psygnosis)
5.	Award Winners: KQV & Red Baron (Sierra On-Line)

Microsoft Files

Rank	Title and Source
1.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Games)
2.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
3.	Compton's Encyclopedia Upgrade (Compton's New Media)
4.	Corel Art Show (Corel)
5.	Key Clipmaster Pro (SoftKey)
6.	Cinemania (Microsoft)
7.	Street Atlas U.S.A. (Delorme)
8.	Key Fonts Pro (SoftKey)
9.	Battle Chess (Interplay)
10.	King's Quest V (Sierra On-Line)

This list is based on data sold by Software Etc., Babbage's, Walden Software and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

Every month our mailbox bulges with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of releasing our latest issue we can expect to see cards pouring in with suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 poll. Through your efforts, we know *exactly* where we stand with our readers (you don't mince words!), and we are treated to well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is a forum for these responses and for the results of our "Playing Lately?" query on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out ... keep 'em coming!

1. X-wing (LucasArts)
2. Strike Commander (Origin)
3. Empire Deluxe (New World Computing)
4. Civilization (MicroProse)
5. World Circuit (MicroProse)
6. Falcon 3.01 (Spectrum HoloByte)
7. Tony LaRussa Baseball II (Strategic Simulations)
8. Dune II (Virgin Games)
9. Ultima VII: Serpents Isle (Origin)
10. The 7th Guest (Virgin Games)

Just the way I want to be

In Issue 106 the prying minds at CGW asked you about computer gaming's effect on your relationships with other humans. The overwhelming response indicates that there are a lot of neglected Significant Others out there! Where families of gamers were concerned, the classic "Battle for the TV Remote" has been moved to the computer room, where the power struggle continues. On the positive side, many of you have made cyber-friendships on networks and have made gaming a part of family Quality Time. Here are some more responses:

"We have an IBM clone and active SNES and NES systems. My sons' (2) friends love to come over because we always have something new for one of the systems. I even my wife finally gave in, thanks to Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit for the IBM. We are definitely a gaming family!"
- Royce Brannard, South Windsor, CT

"Non-gamer types think I'm gonzo for wanting a dark house, a full pack of smokes, and a 12 pack of Pepsi on a Saturday night (and a screamer PC)."

- G. Klepinger, Troy, OH

"My co-workers suffer the most. I have to wait until my wife and baby (yes, I am whupped) are asleep before I can turn on the computer. I get pretty cranky on 3 hours of sleep!"

- B. McGeorge, Cincinnati, OH

"When I am playing late into the night and my S.O. (i.e. wife) is sleeping, the music from some of the games gives her nightmares... she says."

Anonymous, No Post Mark, U.S.A.

"Some folks just don't understand the interest ('for a grown man' is understood). These are compensated by the computer game literate who establish a firmer bond. Unfortunately those who don't understand are further alienated when they fail to understand the 'language' or game references. Pity!"

Misunderstood, Los Angeles, CA

"Justifying money spent is the biggest problem w/S.O. A \$40 game somehow seems worse than \$40 worth of murder mysteries spread out over a month or two. As to others, it's like any other innocuous pastime; it develops common ground with those who are in tune and blank stares from those who are not."

- Unmanned Gamer, Kansas City, MO

"Other people? Oh, you mean the Sysop. He's the only one I know by a real name. My poor wife keeps crying, but I'll never admit most of her problems would be cured by the pause button."

- C. Brandon Quinn, Tyler, TX



The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Consumers and publishers are both frustrated at the need for adding patches into "buggy" programs, but they seem to be an interim solution that is going to be with the hobby for a while (presumably, until a standard platform configuration is agreed upon). So, until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* will publish a regular list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from most major networks (e.g., Compuserve or GENie), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

(* indicates new files)

Aces of the Pacific 1946 Add-On Disk Update: Single Missions will now be saved correctly, and several fixes have been made to Career Pilots, including the elimination of known Shell System Errors. 3/10/93.

Air Bucks Version 1.2: A major overhaul of the original airline strategy game. 4/17/93

Ancient Art of War in the Skies Update: Version 02 of the game. 3/01/93

***Battles of Destiny V1.1 Patch:** Enhancements and bug fixes include: Patrol Mode, Map Editor, and two player modem enhancements. 5/06/93

***Buzz Aldrin Race Into Space Update:** Fixes the "screen blackout" bug and adds an Undo button to the Purchase screen. 5/04/93

Caesar with Stacker: Allows players to use Impressions' game with the Stacker utility. 3/05/93

Civilization Version 1.0.8 (Macintosh): Latest and greatest version of the reigning king of strategy. 2/23/93

Darklands Version 07 Update: Latest version of MicroProse's RPG. 3/05/93

Dune II Patch File: Fixes problems with the delivery of items from CHOAM. 4/18/93

***Empire Deluxe Version 3.1:** This new version makes a myriad of feature changes and bug fixes to Version 3.0. 4/30/93

***F15 Strike Eagle III Version 3 Update:** Corrects minor errors in earlier versions. 4/25/93

Front Page Sports Football: A new version is available which improves upon the original release in many ways. 2/15/93

Great Naval Battles/North Atlantic Update: Updates all GNBNA files to version 1.2. 2/23/93

Gunship 2000 Islands and Ice Patch Version .085: Corrects keyboard lockout problems some gamers are having. 2/11/93

***Harpoon Version 1.32A Upgrade:** Makes changes to the Harpoon game system. 5/18/93

Hockey League Simulator 2 Update V1.11: New version for the IBM. 2/03/93

IndyJones/Atlantis Mac Patch: Corrects the "desert balloon" crash bug in the Mac version. 4/15/93

***Indy Jones/Atlantis 486 Patch:** Allows one to play the game on a 486 without color problems or errors. 5/26/93

***Jordan in Flight SVGA Patch:** Allows owners of Diamond Stealth, Diamond Stealth 24 and Orchid Fahrenheit 1280 Plus video cards to run the game in SVGA. 5/21/93

Links 386 Pro Update Version 1.09: Includes new drivers for specific video cards, a new Sound Blaster Pro 16 driver, and fixes the Harbour Town Hole 14 lockup. 3/03/93

Magic Candle III Version 1.16: Fixes problems with Sound Blaster support, mirror of honesty/candlewick problems, difficulties with transferred characters from MC2, and other minor glitches. 2/17/93

Mantis Update (IBM): Adds new features and improves gameplay. For disk-based version only. 3/01/93

Pacific War V1.1 Upgrade: The "official" SSI upgrade to Gary Grigsby's Pacific War. 4/18/93

Solitaire's Journey Patch V1.03: This is a patch for those having problems with saved Tournament games and those having mouse troubles. 2/12/93

Space Quest 5 Patch: Corrects the following: (1) Inability to Restore or Quit after running out of time on WD-40's ship. (2) Inability to skip polishing the Star Con crest in EGA mode. (3) Loss of cursor when Roger steps off the log which spans the river on Kiz Urazgubi. 2/26/93

Sumpter to Appomattox Update: Fixes the "Build" routine and eliminates the memory error that some gamers were having. 3/13/93

Task Force 1942 Update: Corrects the waypoint problem, among others. 2/15/93

***The Seventh Guest Fix:** Corrects the problems with some video cards and a few other minor details. 5/12/93

Tom Landry Football V. 1.03 Update (IBM & Mac): Corrects problems with high-speed modem play. 3/06/93

***Tony LaRussa II Patch:** Fixes bugs in SSI's baseball simulation. 5/21/93

Twilight 2000 Colonel Upgrade (VGA only): Adds extra sounds and graphics, and adds a new ending to the game. 2/02/93

Ultima VII Version 3.4: Lord British fixes some minor leaks in the roof of Castle Britannia. Updates from Version 3.0 to 3.4. 2/17/93

Ultima Underworld II Patch: Fixes the "strike" problem, local bus difficulties, and a few others. 2/24/93

***Unlimited Adventures Version 1.1 Patch:** In addition to new files for the software, this file contains a supplement to the game's manual. 5/21/93

***Unlimited Adventures Design Guide Supplement:** A Technical Manual for Adventure Design by Scott Gries and MicroMagic, Inc. The official manual supplement. 5/20/93

Wilson Pro Staff Golf Update: Corrects mouse driver problems and errors where incorrect driving clubs were selected for certain ranges. 4/21/93

World Circuit Modem Update V1.05: Corrects problems with 2400 baud modems. 4/08/93

X-wing I/O Soundcard Patch: Allows I/O port settings of 210-260. 4/15/93

X-wing Roland Sound Patch: Fixes crash bugs associated with the Roland soundcard on 486 machines. 4/15/93

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

Computer Gaming World is Prodigy's on-line games expert. Look for us in their Game Center, a forum where users read articles posted on-line by CGW and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXP1 40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by CGW and is updated weekly. Note that it is not a cumulative rating over time (like the CGW Top 100 Poll). Instead, the Prodigy Game Poll is a weekly "Snapshot" of game popularity with gamers rating their favorites on a 1-10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this data to our readers as another barometer of "what's hot" in computer gaming.

GAME POLL

TOP TEN RANKED GAMES

Week of May 14 to May 20

RANK	SCORE	TITLE	RANK	SCORE	TITLE
1	2457	Wolfenstein-3D	6	1485	Falcon 3.0
2	2018	X-Wing	7	1290	Links 386 Pro
3	1818	Civilization	8	1247	Aces of Pacific
4	1776	Ninja Commando 2	9	1093	Front Page Football
5	1751	King's Quest IV	10	1142	Ultima Underworld

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The Rumor Bag

by Sir Oscar Lloyd Hammerstein III

The orchestra pit at the Hollywood Pantages is not really all that large. The old movie house, now resurrected as a legitimate theater, has a pit that doesn't seem much bigger than the sprites on an old 8-bit cartridge game. Nonetheless, here I was in bag and black tie. My motto is, "Have rux and tuba. Will travel."

As the concertmistress gave us a concert B-flat on her english horn, it reminded me that Three-Sixty Pacific has acquired the rights to the soundtrack to *Victory at Sea* for use with their upcoming game of the same name. I made a mental note to remind my readers that the Richard Rodgers melodies were orchestrated for the films by Robert Russell Bennett, a prolific composer who enhanced many of the Rodgers and Hammerstein scores of Broadway's golden era.

Then, I played my low B-flat and tried to drop to the pedal tone below it. It sounded like a sound effect from an episode of the *Star Trek* television series. I tried again. There was something rattling inside the bell of my horn. If I didn't know better, I would swear it was like the time in high school when this clown threw his lunch bag in my sousaphone and kept me from being solidly in tune all semester. It wasn't until we washed out the horns at the end of the year that we discovered why my tone had been so far off all year long.

This time, I was determined to investigate.

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I reached into the bell and pulled out, not a melon like the Sousaphone player in Activision's upcoming *Simon the Sorcerer* comedy adventure, but a toybox. It was a near empty box with the Playmates label on it. Inside the box was a note that said, "Thought you'd want to know, Novotrade is currently developing the *Deep Space Nine* license for Playmates." I looked quickly around the orchestra pit to see if I could determine which musician had been my source. Everyone seemed to be concentrating on warming up, but I couldn't.

The large theater with its ornate teak woodcarving was about halfway full as I lipped a few octaves and absent-mindedly listened to the flutes playing some familiar runs as they warmed up. I suddenly realized that they were playing the old theme song to the *Speed Racer* cartoon series. I placed my tuba on the floor and, since it wasn't time to start, maneuvered next to the second chair flute player. I don't know why I suspected her as my source, except that one look at that clingy, black, sequined dress with the side slit perfectly positioned for tantalizing limb exposure made me *hope* she was my source.

"Accolade," was all she said before her Mona Lisa smile transformed into a proper flutist embouchure and she flipped her long brunette hair in my direction as if to say, "Go away." Well, I can take a hint. I can tell when someone has told me all they are going to tell. If Accolade was going to be publishing a *Speed Racer* game, that was fine with me. "Mach-a-go-go!" I whispered, using the Japanese lyrics to the theme song as I moved back to my seat.

We tuned again and our conductor prepared for the downbeat of the overture. We offered cacophonous sounds as an introduction; wove subtle nuances throughout the woodcarved auditorium as we foreshadowed the love theme; and swelled to the rich orchestrations which the crowd would hear in the final reprise. Even Bach himself, or at least The Fat Man, would be pleased with the applause garnered after the overture. The thought of The Fat Man reminded me that his score for Electronic Arts' upcoming *Sea-wolf* is supposed to feature music for 16 different game states and support up to 20 sound cards.

It served to remind me about a great technological breakthrough I had observed when I did a gig in Baltimore, recently. We had dropped by MicroProse to check out Sid Meier's latest project. Here Mr. CGW Hall of Fame was supposed to be at work on *Sid*

Meier's Civil War, but we were hearing all of these baroque chorales coming out of his office. Somehow, we didn't think they fit the civil war motif. So, we stepped in the door and Sid quickly hid Arnold Schoenberg's classic work on counterpoint under one of the volumes from Shelby Foote's history of the war. He insisted that what he was working on was just a mental exercise, a programming experiment. What he had created was sheer genius. *C.P.U. Bach™ for the 3DO* is a revolutionary piece of artificial intelligence. Sid and Jeff Briggs have managed to program the rules for baroque composition and counterpoint into a computer program. Then, the program creates an infinite number of compositions in the style of Bach. The DOS-based prototype can even print out musical scores and our sources indicate that users will be able to save selections, even on the 3DO version (the only announced version) of the product. Plus, interactive multiplayer users (i.e. 3DO owners) will be able to adjust tempo, select instrumentation and, essentially, conduct the dynamics for each arrangement.

I probably would have stayed in my reverie had it not been for the fact that one of the dancers in the big production number chose that moment to come flying off the stage and land in my tuba. Once my lip and teeth quit hurting from having the mouthpiece jammed into my face, I couldn't make up my mind whether she looked like she had just been tackled in EA Sports' upcoming Bill Walsh football game or MicroProse's projected 3-D football game by Ed Fletcher (project leader for the original *Wayne Gretzky Hockey*). All I knew was that my wife was never going to believe that a pulchritudinous young dancer had bruised my lip like this without my *deserving* to get clobbered (wink, wink, nudge, nudge).

I also knew that the conductor was scowling at me as though this interruption was my fault. Who did he think he was, "king" of the orchestra pit? I submitted to his authority and prepared for my favorite piece, the one where the tuba has a melodic line for a whole four measures, but I longed for revenge. Maybe, I thought, now that Avalon Hill has announced their intent to publish *Kingmaker* as a computer game, I could thrash Sir Stuff Shirt in our own little *War of the Roses*. The glorious thought almost made me miss my cue. For a tuba player, that can be even more serious than missing a deadline (but don't tell my editor). **CGW**

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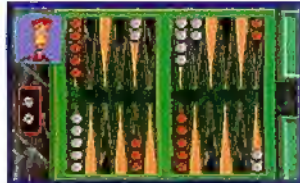


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